

SELECTIONS FROM
SWINBURNE



WILLIAM O. RAYMOND

Robert Danton

SELECTIONS FROM SWINBURNE

EDITED BY
WILLIAM O. RAYMOND, PH. D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

SELECTIONS FROM
SHYBURN

EDITED BY
WILLIAM G. BATHURST, D.D.
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY, INC.



Printed in the U. S. A.

NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For permission to reprint certain poems of Swinburne and other extracts I wish to thank the following publishers:

Dodd, Mead & Company, for "The White Maid's Wooing," "Recollections," and citations from *The Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne*.

Harper & Brothers, for "The Lake of Gaube."

Houghton Mifflin Company, for the sketch of Swinburne at Fryston, in *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Every student of the poet must acknowledge his indebtedness to such indispensable works as Sir Edmund Gosse's *The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne* and Mr. Thomas J. Wise's *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of Algernon Charles Swinburne*.

I am under particular obligation to Professor R. M. Wenley for valuable suggestions in connection with the Introduction to this book.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	vii
SELECTIONS FROM "ATALANTA IN CALYDON" (1865)	
Maiden, and Mistress of the Months and Stars	I
When the Hounds of Spring	3
Before the Beginning of Years	4
We Have Seen Thee, O Love	6
Who Hath Given Man Speech?	6
O That I Now, I Too Were	II
The Death of Meleager	14
SELECTION FROM "CHASTELARD" (1865)	
Between the Sunset and the Sea	20
SELECTIONS FROM "POEMS AND BALLADS" (1866)	
A Ballad of Life	21
A Ballad of Death	23
Laus Veneris	26
The Triumph of Time	40
A Leave-Taking	51
Itylus	52
Anactoria	54
Hymn to Proserpine	62
Ilicet	67
In the Orchard	72
A Match	74
Faustine	75
Rococo	81
Stage Love	83
A Ballad of Burdens	84
Before the Mirror	86
Erotion	88
In Memory of Walter Savage Landor	89
A Song in Time of Order	91
A Song in Time of Revolution	93

	PAGE
To Victor Hugo.....	96
Before Dawn.....	102
Dolores.....	104
The Garden of Proserpine.....	117
Hesperia.....	119
Love at Sea.....	124
The Sundew.....	125
Félise.....	127
An Interlude.....	136
Sapphics.....	138
Madonna Mia.....	140
Dedication.....	143
SELECTIONS FROM "SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE" (1871)	
Prelude.....	146
Hertha.....	151
The Pilgrims.....	158
To Walt Whitman in America.....	161
Cor Cordium.....	165
The Song of the Standard.....	166
"Non Dolet".....	168
The Oblation.....	169
SELECTIONS FROM "ERECHTHEUS" (1876)	
Oreithyia.....	169
Storm and Battle.....	172
SELECTIONS FROM "POEMS AND BALLADS" (1878)	
A Forsaken Garden.....	178
Relics.....	181
At a Month's End.....	183
A Wasted Vigil.....	187
Ave Atque Vale.....	190
In Memory of Barry Cornwall.....	196
Ex-Voto.....	198
A Ballad of Dreamland.....	201
A Ballad of François Villon.....	202
Song.....	203

	PAGE
A Vision of Spring in Winter.....	204
At Parting.....	207
Child's Song.....	207
Four Songs of Four Seasons	
I. Winter in Northumberland.....	208
II. Spring in Tuscany.....	215
III. Summer in Auvergne.....	217
IV. Autumn in Cornwall.....	219
SELECTIONS FROM "SONGS OF THE SPRINGTIDES" (1880)	
Thalassius.....	220
SELECTIONS FROM "STUDIES IN SONG" (1880)	
Grand Chorus of Birds from Aristophanes.....	234
Evening on the Broads.....	236
By the North Sea.....	242
SELECTIONS FROM "TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE AND OTHER POEMS" (1882)	
Prelude.....	251
Iseult of Ireland.....	258
Tristram of Lyonesse.....	260
Dickens.....	263
Adieux à Marie Stuart.....	264
Herse.....	267
A Child's Laughter.....	269
A Child's Future.....	270
Christopher Marlowe.....	271
William Shakespeare.....	272
Ben Jonson.....	272
Beaumont and Fletcher.....	273
The Many.....	273
Children.....	274
Child and Poet.....	274
SELECTIONS FROM "A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS" (1883)	
Étude Réaliste.....	275
Babyhood.....	276
First Footsteps.....	277

	PAGE
The Roundel	278
Before Sunset	278
On an Old Roundel	279
Envoi	279
SELECTIONS FROM "A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY AND OTHER POEMS" (1884)	
On a Country Road	280
The Sunbows	281
On the Verge	282
Lines on the Monument of Giuseppe Mazzini	284
SELECTIONS FROM "POEMS AND BALLADS" (1880)	
The Commonweal	286
Pan and Thalassius	296
In Time of Mourning	301
The Interpreters	302
The Winds	303
A Lyke-Wake Song	304
A Jacobite's Farewell	305
The Tyneside Widow	305
SELECTIONS FROM "ASTROPHEL AND OTHER POEMS" (1894)	
A Nympholept	308
A Swimmer's Dream	316
Loch Torridon	320
The Palace of Pan	325
Eton: An Ode	328
On the Death of Robert Browning	329
Threnody	330
SELECTIONS FROM "A CHANNEL PASSAGE AND OTHER POEMS" (1904)	
The Lake of Gaube	332
SELECTIONS FROM "POSTHUMOUS POEMS" (1917)	
The White Maid's Wooing	335
Recollections	336
Notes	339

INTRODUCTION

IN the course of that fine tribute to the memory of Walter Savage Landor, which Swinburne wrote near the dawn of his own poetical career, he describes himself as looking to the future, yet bound by certain loyalties to the past:

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

These lines may be regarded as emblematic of Swinburne's place in nineteenth century poetry. As "the youngest singer" of the Victorian era, the last of its six great poets, he looks before and after, summing up a significant period in English literary history, yet in certain respects pointing beyond it.

In the eyes of his contemporaries the first fruit of Swinburne's genius marked the inauguration of a new age in poetry. Nor is this strange, considering the sensational nature of his advent in the field of English letters. In their personal recollections of the poet, Gosse, Saintsbury and others have given vivid pen pictures of the storm of controversy that raged about his earlier writings. Passion and revolt were primary characteristics of Swinburne's temperament, as manifested in life and art, and it was as a rebel against the established order of things—the proprieties and conventions of mid-Victorianism—that he flashed, like some meteoric portent, into the tranquil heavens of English poetry in the eighteen-sixties. Yet, though Swinburne was both blessed and banned by his contemporaries as the forerunner of a new era in poetry, and like a stormy petrel seemed to beat his way into an unexplored ocean away from the quiet coves of idyllic Tennysonian verse, passage of time enables

us to realize the strength and manifoldness of the ties that bound him to the past. Individualistic and courageous as he undoubtedly is in temper of mind and emotional impulse, his genius is, in the last analysis, assimilative rather than prophetic. Despite his break with middle class Puritan tradition he is thoroughly English, a representative of that distinguished minority within the nation which foreigners are apt to forget, the Cavaliers or Jacobites, who made themselves felt so powerfully in Scott and Ruskin.

Now that the Victorian age lies revealed in retrospect, like a tale that is told, Swinburne's work, in its major import, seems the closing chapter and the summing up of a great epoch in literature, and only to a minor degree the herald of a new régime in art.

Algernon Charles Swinburne was born in Chester Street, Grosvenor Place, London, on the 5th of April, 1837. The son of a British admiral, Charles Henry Swinburne, the poet was descended, on his father's side, from an ancient Northumbrian border clan, whose history runs back into the days of the Plantagenet monarchs, and is interwoven with the romantic episodes of feudal warfare between the houses of Percy and Douglas. A Sir Adam de Swinburne, a man of some consequence in the reign of Edward II, and a Sir William de Swinburne, who became lord of Chollerton and Capheaton in the reign of Henry III, were amongst the most distinguished of his ancestors. That the family seem at one time to have held the stewardship of the immense possessions of the Percies in Northumbria is evidence of the importance of the house. The permanent settlement of the Swinburnes at Capheaton dates from the reign of Elizabeth, though their residence was afterwards interrupted by periods of exile during the Jacobite rebellions. At the time of the restoration of Charles II, in 1660, a baronetcy was conferred upon the head of the family. The title, in the year of Swinburne's birth, was held by his grandfather. From the latter, a man of strong and irascible personality, who had been a friend of Mirabeau and an ultra liberal, the poet received the first impress of those revolutionary enthu-

siasms which were subsequently deepened by his literary sympathies.

Through his mother, Lady Jane Henrietta, daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham, Swinburne could claim descent from a family of equal dignity and ancient lineage. The Ashburnhams, according to such authorities as Fuller and Nisbet, were settled in Sussex before the Norman Conquest. Various members of this house left their imprint on history. Edmund Gosse states that "the poet took pleasure in the fidelity of John Ashburnham who 'was the closest follower of Charles I to his death,' and who cleverly arranged the King's safe-conduct from Oxford." Swinburne, throughout his life, was proud of the Jacobite traditions of his ancestry, "We were all Catholic and Jacobite rebels and exiles," he writes, and exults in belonging to a family which, he says, "in every Catholic rebellion from the days of my own Queen Mary to those of Charles Edward had given their blood like water and their lands like dust for the Stuarts."

The strain of Jacobite blood in Swinburne's veins may serve to illustrate the spirit of his revolt against the established institutions and beliefs of his own day. His rebellions are not inspired, save in the most superficial fashion, by a prophetic vision of the future; they are kindled, like those of his Jacobite forefathers, by loyalties to ideals of the past. Despite the note of revolt that is struck so repeatedly in Swinburne's poetry, he is not, as his American contemporary Walt Whitman was, a blazer of new trails. Though regarded by his own generation as "a setter forth of strange gods," his true place in literature is at the close of a great romantic era beginning with Burns, closing perhaps with Disraeli's fall from power in 1880. Apart from the indirect influences of his attack on the Tennysonian tradition and the moral proprieties associated with it, Swinburne cannot be called a modernist in any legitimate sense of the term.

Receptivity, transformed by the temper of revolt, must therefore be regarded as a salient characteristic of Swinburne's genius. With all his extraordinary talent, he is not, like Wordsworth or Browning, a great original force. Neither

is he elemental, so far as his apostrophe to Liberty is concerned, in the way that Shelley is elemental. There is no lack of vehemence or majesty in the trumpet blast that sounds in "The Eve of Revolution." Yet it is not the cosmic, inevitable strain that echoes the very accents of Nature and is "to unawakened earth the trumpet of a prophecy."

The variety of elements which enter into the form and content of Swinburne's poetry, are, in themselves, an evidence of the manner in which the poet derived his inspiration and craftsmanship from many fountain-heads in the life and letters of the past. In the sphere of lyric technique, the amazing compass of his instrumentation, in which he seems to gather chords of melody and rhythmical devices from the whole range of classical and romantic literature, is an outstanding illustration of his ability to absorb and assimilate the artistic treasures bequeathed by the ages.

Custom and education lent him opportunity. The poet was educated at Eton (1849-1853) and at Balliol College, Oxford (1856-1859). Though the influence of Eton and Oxford counted for much, Swinburne, like other great men of letters, was, in a larger sense, self-taught. He was from childhood passionately devoted to literature; an insatiable yet discriminating reader, uniting catholicity of interest and generosity of appreciation with critical insight, and gifted with a memory bordering on the miraculous. Amongst those massive and brilliant possessions, which Swinburne garnered as treasure-trove from his years of intellectual adventuring in "the realms of gold," may be mentioned his wonderful comprehension of the form and spirit of Greek poetry, his intimate acquaintance with the whole range of Elizabethan dramatic literature, and his familiarity with the masterpieces of French verse, from Villon and Ronsard to Hugo and Baudelaire.

Nor were his inspirations derived exclusively from books. During residence at Oxford he formed personal friendships with a number of men who were destined to play a distinguished part in the intellectual life of Great Britain. He was a prominent member of the Old Mortality Society founded by John Nichol in 1856, an organization which included such

men as T. H. Green, Walter Pater, J. A. Symonds, Albert Venn Dicey, Edward Caird and James Bryce. The year 1857 marks the beginning of his friendship with the Pre-Raphaelite group, D. G. Rossetti, William Morris, and Burne-Jones, whom he met in Oxford, while they were engaged upon the frescoes of the Union. Though the continuity of Swinburne's devotion to republican aspirations is somewhat obscured by his sensuous naturalism, his enthusiasm for the ideals of the French Revolution and their offspring in the political movements of modern Europe flamed as ardently in his undergraduate days as in 1871. Victor Hugo, Walter Savage Landor, Giuseppe Mazzini, and the revolutionary movements linked with them, were dear to his heart from youth to age; while Bonapartism, with its imperialistic ambitions, was, as consistently, the subject of his most unsparing invective.

Another source of inspiration, derived from Nature rather than the works of man, may be traced far back of the exultant and magnificent expression that the poet has given it in literature, "As for the sea," he wrote to Stedman, "its salt *must* have been in my blood before I was born."

Heredity and environment combined to foster in Swinburne a love of the ocean in all its varying moods. In addition to the traditions of his father's distinguished naval service, his entire childhood was spent by the seacoast, either with his parents at East-Dene, Bonchurch, on the Isle of Wight, or with his grandfather at Capheaton in Northumbria.

It was no mere flight of rhetorical fancy or transient sentiment which led him to apostrophize the sea in "The Triumph of Time" as "the mother and lover of men," or more intimately "O fair green-girdled mother of mine." The sea was his natal element, and his representation of it, both in poetry and prose, the passionate voicing of an instinctive and lifelong devotion.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
My mother sea?

Once more I give my body and soul to thee,
 Who hast my soul for ever: cliff and sand
 Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
 Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,
 More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
 My mother sea.

(In *Guernsey*)

That the main currents of Swinburne's thought and the foci of his literary tastes and personal enthusiasms were already determined before he left Oxford in 1860, does not preclude either a growth of these interests or a variation in the stress placed upon them in the writings of the poet. His first volume, consisting of two short plays, *The Queen Mother and Rosamund* (1860), is imitative in form and spirit of the Elizabethan drama, revealing the influence of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Webster. *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), a play on the Greek model, is steeped in Hellenism, and constitutes the noblest single illustration of Swinburne's love of the classics. *Chastelard* (1866), the first of three dramas centring on the person of Mary Stuart, recalls the Jacobite strain in the poet's ancestry and his devotion to that romantic Queen, who had been, even in his schooldays, the "red star of boyhood's fiery thought." In *Poems and Ballads* (1866), his kinship with the Pre-Raphaelites and also his affinities with the French romanticists, Hugo, Gautier, and Baudelaire, are markedly in evidence. Finally, closing the most significant decade of his poetical production, *A Song of Italy* (1867) and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) are animated by a passion for liberty and republicanism, a hero-worship of Hugo, Mazzini, and the causes they represent.

Though the classification is somewhat arbitrary, the central interests of Swinburne's poetry may be summed up under three general headings:

First: Purely literary themes and inspirations, such as those derived from the poet's knowledge of the classics, the Bible, and the Elizabethan drama.

Second: Love of Nature, as exemplified in his passion for the sea.

Third: Enthusiasms, in part literary, but also bound up with men and movements of the age, such as the tendencies of Pre-Raphaelitism, and the revolutionary idealism evoked by the struggle for the liberation of Italy.

Swinburne's indebtedness to the classics, more particularly to Greek literature, is almost incalculable. As Edmund Gosse says: "there can be little doubt that Swinburne's mind and memory were more deeply immersed in the poetry of the ancients than that of any other English poet, more than that of Milton, or even of Landor."

And he drew from his great storehouse, not as a literalist, but as a recreator of the spirit of Hellenism. With all its fidelity to Greek sources, *Atalanta in Calydon* is not, like Arnold's *Merope*, a correct but cold and unimpassioned reproduction of ancient drama. It has life, vivacity and freshness. Greek in plot and structure, in literary reminiscence, in purity and high seriousness of tone and diction, it is yet subtly colored by Swinburne's romanticism and temper of revolt. In particular, the railing accusation of the Gods in *Atalanta in Calydon* is more modern than Greek, being in reality an expression of that revolutionary rationalism which flares up at a later date in *Songs before Sunrise*.

It is impossible, within the scope of a brief introduction, to mention even a tithe of the classical references woven into the texture of the poet's writings. Attention may be called in passing to such manifest sources of inspiration as those of Æschylus in *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*; Pindar in "Athens"; Sappho in "Anactoria," "Sapphics" and "On the Cliffs"; Euripides in "Phædra"; Sophocles in "At Eleusis"; Homer in "By the North Sea"; Aristophanes in the "Grand Chorus of Birds."

Attached as he was to Sappho and Catullus, Æschylus and Pindar were the authors whom Swinburne worshipped above all others amongst the ancients. Concerning these he writes:

You may remember that I always have maintained it is far easier to overtop Euripides by the head and shoulders than to come up to

the waist of Sophocles or the knee of Æschylus. . . . Why, Isaiah and Ezekiel were timid, reserved, costive, hide-bound, in the way of "imagery," compared to Pindar and Æschylus—the two Greeks whom, if I must not say I have tried to follow, I must say I always read with the most passionate sympathy and magnetic attraction to the thought and utterance alike that any poet ever puts into me. Take any great ode of Pindar's, and in the way of wealth and profusion and oppression of inexhaustible imagery, I greatly fear my battle Chorus will read as flat and tame after it as Longfellow after Shelley.

Though Swinburne twists the phraseology of the Scriptures to strange uses, the influence of the Bible throughout his poetry is as pervasive as that of the classics. His family were devout members of the Church of England, in sympathy with the Oxford movement, and the poet's intimate knowledge of the Bible was acquired, like that of Ruskin, as a child at his mother's knee. Later in life, while glancing at a copy of Lamb's *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*, he said:

"That book taught me more than any other in the world,—that and the Bible." With the possible exception of Ruskin no modern English writer is more indebted to the language and diction of the King James version of the Scriptures than Swinburne. The phrases, the rhythm, the cadences of various passages from the Bible are repeatedly reëchoed in his poetry.

Yet, despite the enrichment of Swinburne's style and verbal resources through his familiarity with the speech and imagery of the Scriptures, it may be seriously questioned whether his use of these can be regarded as a felicitous element in his writings. Oliver Elton goes so far as to say: "The two worst influences on Mr. Swinburne's art have been Victor Hugo and the Authorized Version of the Bible." This is a sweeping statement and seems to stand in need of qualification. Yet the manner of the poet's employment of Biblical phraseology and illustration, particularly in *Poems and Ballads* and *Songs before Sunrise*, is open to criticism, from an artistic as well as a religious standpoint.

In the choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*, Swinburne frequently paraphrases the august and majestic language of Scripture to voice a neo-pagan revolt against the tyranny of

heaven. Here, however, owing to the difference in setting, no painful comparison with the associations of the Bible, nor element of parody, is suggested. Moreover, the energy, austerity, and terseness of an utterance like that of Job or Amos is in keeping with the despairing cry of humanity at war with the blind, remorseless power of Fate. But the use of Biblical style and imagery in connection with erotic poetry, or as a weapon of invective and irony in Swinburne's attack on kings, priests and creeds—apart from the ethical question involved—is an offence against good taste and the fitness of things. In justice to the poet it should be remembered that he has a positive as well as a negative ideal in view, in the constant paraphrase of the Old and New Testament that runs through such poems as the "Hymn of Man," "Before a Crucifix," "Super Flumina Babylonis," "Mater Dolorosa" and "Diræ." He employs Scriptural terminology, not merely to travesty what he regards as outworn superstitions, but also to chant with prophetic fervor his deification of Freedom and "the holy spirit of man."

In such masterpieces as "Hertha" and "The Pilgrims," the use of Biblical diction is subtle, and the stately eloquence and dignity that invest the poems through their kinship with it is in harmony with their sublimity of thought. But, despite the vehemence of Swinburne's rhetoric, the artistry of the poems in *Songs before Sunrise*, which are characterized by Scriptural paraphrase, is seldom completely convincing. This worship of Liberty and denunciation of Christianity in the language of the Bible is at once too bold and too conventional; daring, in its strange shifting of the meaning and values of the Scriptures to fit a new context, yet mechanical in its literal transcription of the speech and symbolism of the Old and New Testament.

Of the two great historical influences that moulded the thought and kindled the genius of Swinburne, Pre-Raphaelitism was at first in the foreground. He may be said to have begun his poetical career as an avowed disciple of Daniel Gabriel Rossetti. In the eyes of Swinburne's contemporaries in the eighteen-sixties, the first series of *Poems and Ballads*

was a defiant flaunting of the banner of Pre-Raphaelitism in the face of English public opinion. Like a modern Azazel, the poet's countrymen beheld him unfurling to the wind an ensign "with gems and golden lustre rich emblazed," yet revealing with its beauty gleams of a lurid and Satanic splendor.

The furore created by the publication of this collection of poems in 1866 was in proportion to the violence of the assault made on the moral orthodoxy of an age in which the Respectabilities had become shibboleths and refinement carried to the verge of prudery. In "*Dolores, Anactoria, Laus Veneris*," and poems of similar character, Swinburne hurled his gauntlet directly in the face of revered Victorian traditions, and the gage of battle was promptly taken up. *Poems and Ballads* immediately became in the popular mind, the most tangible and picturesque symbol of the sensuous and æsthetic tendencies of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with their interblending of enchantment and peril.

While the bitterness of the controversy that raged about these poems may be deplored, particularly in so far as it diverted attention from their lyrical beauty, the dispute cannot be lightly dismissed as a mere literary squabble. Many of Swinburne's apologists have condemned his critics for their failure to recognize that the eroticism and excessive appeal to the senses of *Poems and Ballads* were a *péché de jeunesse*, as the poet himself subsequently designated them. "A very brilliant youth, it's all youth," had been Jowett's reputed epigrammatic comment on Swinburne at Balliol. Yet, looking back upon the past from the vantage ground of the present, the antagonists of Swinburne were not altogether in error in discerning, in the contents of this remarkable volume, an attack on the integrity of the Victorian social order. The rift in that imposing edifice was a small one, yet verse of the nature of *Poems and Ballads* marks the beginning of the process of disintegration and the approaching *fin de siècle*.

How far the shaking of Swinburne's thyrsus in the face of a scandalized British public has contributed to the banishment

of Victorian decorum or squeamishness—as one may choose to shade the phrase—may be difficult to determine. Nevertheless, no student of the dramatic swing of life and letters from the reserves and conventionalities of the Victorian epoch to the franker and more outspoken spirit of our own age, can fail to reckon with a work which represents the first significant challenging, in Art, of the cherished proprieties of the older era.

While the deliberate renunciation of the motif of sensuous passion in the *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) and the dedication of Swinburne's powers to the cause of liberty marks a striking change in the themes and central interests of his verse, it does not affect the fundamental temper of revolt. If the divergence from the beaten path is less sensational, after the poet has forsworn the enchantments of the Venusberg, it is none the less clearly in evidence. He now splinters a lance in the lists of politics and theology. His profession of republicanism, and the androtheism or neo-paganism of his religious views, as voiced in such poems as "A Marching Song," "Perinde ac Cadaver," "Hertha" and the "Hymn of Man," are as open a defiance of the traditional beliefs and conventional standards of the central Victorian period, as the moral heterodoxies of *Poems and Ballads*.

The publication of *Songs before Sunrise* in 1871, may be said to mark the close of the most important period of Swinburne's work—the end of the decade during which he both fascinated and startled his contemporaries, and exerted such a signal, and in some respects revolutionary influence in the sphere of English poetry.

Throughout these ten years of intense literary activity Swinburne lived chiefly in London. He varied his residence here with frequent trips to other parts of England and occasional visits to the continent. In London he became intimately associated with that group of poets and artists who were defying mid-Victorian tradition and seeking new channels for æsthetic expression. From 1862–1864 he was a tenant, in common with Daniel Gabriel Rossetti and George Meredith, of Tudor House, a historic old English mansion overlooking the Thames. The acquaintance formed at

Oxford with the members of the inner circle of the Pre-Raphaelite group deepened into close friendship. At the same time he made new friendships with men who in one way or another were associated with this literary and artistic coterie, such as Richard Monckton Milnes, George Frederick Watts, James Whistler, "Barry Cornwall," Sir Richard Burton, and Edmund Gosse. In 1864 Swinburne had a memorable meeting with Landor in Florence six months before the death of the aged poet. Ruskin, who had met Swinburne in his Oxford days, proved a staunch friend in 1866, when he refused to lead a moral crusade against *Poems and Ballads* and praised their author in the most generous terms.

Many vivid impressions of the appearance and personal characteristics of the poet, during these years in London, when he was at the height of his powers, have been given us by his contemporaries. Two well known portraits of Swinburne were painted by Rossetti in 1861 and by Watts in 1867. Amongst the many descriptions in words, two may be cited as particularly colorful and lifelike pictures. The first is a charming reminiscence of the poet in his twenty-third year, by Lady Burne-Jones the wife of the Pre-Raphaelite painter, at whose home Swinburne was a frequent visitor.

His appearance was very unusual and in some ways beautiful, for his hair was glorious in abundance and colour and his eyes indescribably fine. When repeating poetry he had a perfectly natural way of lifting them in a rapt, unconscious gaze, and their clear green colour softened by thick brown eyelashes was unforgettable: 'looks commercing with the skies' expresses it without exaggeration. He was restless beyond words, scarcely standing at all and almost dancing as he walked, while even in sitting he moved continually, seeming to keep time, by a swift movement of the hands at the wrists, and sometimes of the feet also, with some inner rhythm of excitement.

In the year 1862 Henry Adams met Swinburne at a small house party given by Monckton Milnes, and his account of the poet's vivid and arresting personality, as related in *The Education of Henry Adams*, is of extreme interest.

He resembled in action—and in this trait, was remotely followed, a generation later, by another famous young man, Robert Louis Stevenson—a tropical bird, high-crested, long-beaked, quick-moving, with rapid utterance and screams of humor, quite unlike any English lark or nightingale. One could hardly call him a crimson macaw among owls, and yet no ordinary contrast availed.

Adams proceeds to record his impression of “the wild Walpurgis-night of Swinburne’s talk,” and of the way in which the other men of the party were astounded by his eccentricity and his genius.

They could not believe his incredible memory and knowledge of literature, classic, mediæval, and modern; his faculty of reciting a play of Sophocles or a play of Shakespeare, forward or backward, from end to beginning; or Dante, or Villon, or Victor Hugo. They knew not what to make of his rhetorical recitation of his own unpublished ballads—“Faustine”; the “Four Boards of the Coffin Lid”; the “Ballad of Burdens”—which he declaimed as though they were books of the *Iliad*. . . .

Late at night when the symposium broke up, Stirling of Keir wanted to take with him to his chamber a copy of “Queen Rosamund,” the only volume Swinburne had then published, which was on the library table, and Adams offered to light him down with his solitary bedroom candle. All the way, Stirling was ejaculating explosions of wonder, until at length, at the foot of the stairs and at the climax of his imagination, he paused and burst out: “He’s a cross between the devil and the Duke of Argyll!”

A survey of Swinburne’s writings from 1860 to 1871 exhibits the chief interests and salient characteristics of his poetry with a remarkable approximation to completeness. Though he continued to write prolifically after 1871, he returns constantly to the themes and motifs of his earlier inspiration. The dramas of *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881) illustrate, like *Chastelard*, their author’s Jacobean enthusiasm, the three forming a connected trilogy dealing with the character and fortunes of the fair but ill-starred Scottish queen. The fiery invectives of the *Diræ* series of sonnets, printed in the *Songs of Two Nations* (1875), reëcho the revolutionary ardor of *Songs before Sunrise*. *Eretheus* (1876) is a second

play on the Greek model, recalling the classical inspiration of *Atalanta in Calydon*.

The second series of *Poems and Ballads* published in 1878, contains some of Swinburne's finest poetry. The volume reveals a partial return to the spirit of the *Poems and Ballads* of 1866, and the influence of the French romanticists, more particularly Victor Hugo, is plainly discernible. There is however in this later series far less of the riot and fever of sensuous passion, and Beauty is frequently contemplated in a wistful and reflective mood. It contains such masterpieces as "Ave atque Vale," "Ex Voto," "A Forsaken Garden," and "A Vision of Spring in Winter." The restraint and majesty of "Ave atque Vale," with its organ-like harmonies and its power to quicken the imagination through the sublimity of the poet's reflection on the high mystery of death, entitles this elegy on Baudelaire to a place amongst the noblest threnodies in English literature. There are imperishable accents in many lines of this stately requiem.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

The delicacy and romantic tenderness of the descriptions of Nature, in "A Forsaken Garden"; the haunting cadences of the verse; the poignancy of the tragic conflict, in this lonely sea-nook, between beauty and the destructive forces of change and death that overwhelm life and love, yet enhance their preciousness—all combine to make this poem one of the most exquisite of Swinburne's lyrics.

In 1879 Swinburne's health was in a precarious condition and he was probably saved from a bad nervous breakdown

by the providential intervention of his devoted friend, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton. Under his fostering care the sick poet was removed from his lodgings in Great St. James Street, London, to Watts-Dunton's home at the Pines, Putney. In this comfortable Victorian villa, surrounded by every token of affection and forethought that the "maternal solicitude" of Watts-Dunton could lavish upon him, Swinburne spent the last thirty years of his life from 1879 to 1909. Interest in the memorable and extraordinary friendship between these two men has lately been rekindled by the publication of Mrs. Watts-Dunton's charming book *The Home Life of Swinburne*. The question as to whether the change in the personal circumstances in the poet's life from 1879 on was helpful or detrimental to his genius still remains an open one. Yet no reader of Mrs. Watts-Dunton's reminiscences can fail to appreciate the wonderful depth and tenderness of her husband's devotion to Swinburne, or fail to see that the poet's recovery of health and the serenity and happiness of his later years was the direct fruitage of this remarkable friendship.

A characteristic feature of what may be called the Putney period of his poetical composition is the increased volume of verse devoted to descriptions of natural scenery. This appears in *Songs of the Springtides* and *Studies in Song*, both books being published in 1880. The ocean is almost invariably the eye of Swinburne's landscapes, and his passionate love of the sea is everywhere manifest in the poetry written during the years of his residence with Watts-Dunton.

Amongst the numerous collections of verse and the dramas published during the last thirty years of the poet's life may be mentioned, *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *A Midsummer Holiday* (1884), *Marino Faliero* (1885), *Lochrine* (1887), *Poems and Ballads* (1889), *Astrophel* (1894), *The Tale of Balen* (1896), *A Channel Passage* (1904).

The most important single work of this epoch is *Tristram of Lyonesse*. This is Swinburne's main contribution to that imaginative reconstruction of Arthurian romance, which constitutes one of the most fascinating phases of Victorian literary history. Though somewhat weakened as a narrative

by its looseness of structure and lack of definite outline, *Tristram of Lyonesse* contains many magnificent passages. The *Prelude*, written some years before the body of the poem, is vibrant with emotion, and metrically is a fine example of "the splendour and speed" that characterizes the best of Swinburne's verse. The rapture of passion that animates it, throughout the glowing apostrophe to Love and the superb description of the Venus-like zone of starry constellations, gives it a place amongst the most radiant and triumphant accomplishments of the poet's genius. His exaltation in the ever changing life and restless motion of the sea, "the strife more sweet than peace," is nowhere more nobly or vividly revealed than in his rendering of this old Celtic tale of love and adventure.

The physical ecstasy of Tristram's battle with the waves as he swims at the time of the dawning of the sun is wonderfully portrayed.

Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth:
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,
But the life kindled of a fiery birth
And passion of a new-begotten son
Between the live sea and the living sun.
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense;
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
And back with light reluctant heart he bore
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore;

Swinburne's work as a literary critic falls somewhat outside the scope of an introduction to a volume of selections from his poetry. Amongst his important contributions in this field may be cited his studies of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Chapman, William Blake, Charlotte Brontë, and Hugo.

Undue panegyric or vituperation, and extravagance of rhetoric, are flaws in Swinburne's criticism and diction; but there are flashes of splendid insight throughout these writings and occasional passages of clear and luminous as well as highly imaginative prose. The following extract taken from the "dedicatory epistle," which he wrote as a preface to the first collected edition of his poems, illustrates the beauty of his prose when freed from floridness and over-ornamentation. "Not to you or any other poet, nor indeed to the very humblest and simplest lover of poetry, will it seem incongruous or strange, suggestive of imperfect sympathy with life or deficient inspiration from nature, that the very words of Sappho should be heard and recognised in the notes of the nightingales, the glory of the presence of dead poets imagined in the presence of the glory of the sky, the lustre of their advent and their passage felt visible as in vision on the live and limpid floorwork of the cloudless and sunset-coloured sea."

The quoted lines might serve as the elegy of this great poet, whose death took place at The Pines in the seventy-third year of his age on the 10th of April, 1909. He was buried in the churchyard of Bonchurch within sound of the sea and close to the home of his childhood.

In summing up the contribution of Swinburne to English poetry, it is evident that a genius so widely receptive can hardly be regarded as representative of any one particular movement or tendency in art. He is popularly thought of as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite group. Yet, despite the general reception of *Poems and Ballads* as a work conceived in the spirit of Rossetti and his followers, the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism, even in his earlier writings, was more decorative than elemental. Individual poems may of course be selected in which the framework and manner of presentation are distinctively Pre-Raphaelite.

The highly wrought pictorial imagery, abounding in allegory and symbolism, of "A Ballad of Life" and "A Ballad of Death"; the languorous and cloying sensuousness of "Laus Veneris," where "the scented dusty daylight burns the air"; the mediæval fantasies of "The Masque of Queen Bersabe"; mark these particular poems as Pre-Raphaelite both in design and execution. In a more intimate way the Pre-Raphaelite intuition of Beauty as a physical passion, kindling, even torturing, the emotions "through the secret riddle and pure sense of flesh," is reflected in *Poems and Ballads*.

But, while those tendencies in painting and literature, which are somewhat vaguely referred to as Pre-Raphaelite, may be traced in Swinburne's poetry, he is not in the main stream of that movement, and other sources of inspiration of a deeper and more permanent character enter into his work.

One of the cardinal principles of Pre-Raphaelitism was a return in spirit to the middle ages; but Swinburne's interest in mediævalism is superficial, as contrasted with his passionate love of the classics or his devotion to the Elizabethan drama. His spirit is that of a humanist rather than that of a mystic. Here he differs from Rossetti and the leaders of the Oxford movement. Nor is the brilliant unflagging movement of his verse in any way suggestive of that slow pictorial elaboration, that ornateness of technique, so characteristic of Rossetti. In his own individual fashion Swinburne recaptures the winged speed and etherial imagery of Shelley. As Mr. Woodberry has put it: "Fire, air, earth, and water are the four elements from which his very vocabulary seems made up; flame, wind and foam, and all the forms of light are so much a part of his color-rhythm that they become an opaline of verse peculiarly his own."

Though the insurgent passion of Swinburne's verse, kindled by the poet's fervent adherence to the principles of the French Revolution, and fanned into flame by the struggle for Italian liberty, does not blaze at white heat until the publication of *Songs before Sunrise* in 1871, it is from the outset a more important element in his poetry than Pre-Raphaelitism.

Three distinct phases may be traced in the relationship between the French Revolution and English Romanticism. The first is marked by the early writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the seventeen-nineties. The second reaches its climax twenty years later in the impassioned utterances of Byron and Shelley. The third, stirred by political and social agitations, kindred in spirit though inferior in magnitude to the world-shaking upheaval of 1789, has its characteristic expression in the ferment of revolt and enthusiasm for liberty that pervade the poetry of Swinburne. The remarkable poetic career of Landor, that old republican lion whom Swinburne so profoundly venerated, links together all three of these phases. Landor's literary activity extends over a period of sixty-eight years (1795-1863).

To realize the full import of Swinburne's passion for liberty, we must look beyond the particular national issue of his own age, with which it is associated. The definite historical background of *A Song of Italy* and *Songs before Sunrise* cannot compare in importance with that of the works of the earlier romantic poets who were living in the immediate wake of the French Revolution. Here Swinburne writes at a disadvantage as compared with Shelley. Noble as was the struggle for Italian freedom and unity, it lacks the universal significance and dramatic intensity of the epoch-making events that fired the imagination of his predecessor. The European crisis in the middle of the nineteenth century was, after all, a pale reflection of the tremendous cataclysm of 1789. Moreover, Swinburne's dream of an Italian republic was shattered by the establishment of the monarchy, and the Franco-Prussian war seemed to complete the undoing of the work of 1848.

Yet, while Swinburne's devotion to liberty is linked with a more limited historical interest than that of Shelley, it is important to note that he is, in reality, far more concerned with the enunciation of fundamental principles and general conceptions of freedom, than with the triumph of any specific political or social programme. As a matter of fact his ideals go back in every instance to the French Revolution, and the

Italian struggle for liberation is, in his eyes, merely a focusing of the rays that stream from this central orb. Swinburne, as Victor Hugo perceived, was the last champion in English letters of that type of aristocratic republicanism represented by Landor, Byron, and Shelley. Writing in 1871, he still clings to the aims and aspirations of the French Revolution in all their pristine vigor, with their strange intermixture of sublimity and simplicity. Only a poet with a certain *naïveté* of soul and a Jacobite loyalty to a dream of the past could maintain such a position.

Yet the *naïveté* of Swinburne's outlook is also his strength.

It frees the spirit of his political verse from bondage to the passing hour, and gives it intellectual perspective and breadth of horizon. It universalizes his conception of liberty, so that his dream of an Italian republic becomes a symbol of freedom, as a lofty and ideal principle working its way out through the life of the individual and the history of mankind. When Swinburne is dealing with the actual historical events of the Italian conflict, magnificent rhetoric and vehemence of manner often seem to replace genuine passion. He rails at kings and priests and social institutions with a fierceness and abandon that at times recalls the choleric Queen's frenzied ejaculation "Off with his head," in Lewis Carroll's immortal fantasy. But, whenever the poet's representation of freedom becomes footloose and allies itself with the larger vision of liberty that he inherits from the French Revolution, his verse gains in depth of thought and imaginative insight. Poems such as "The Pilgrims" and the "Prelude" to the *Songs before Sunrise* are independent of any contemporary historical setting. They illustrate the way in which the sacred impulses and aspirations of freedom may rise phoenix-wise from the dying embers of social and political programmes apparently trampled underfoot by the time spirit of their age.

In those "studies of passion and sensation" of which the famous first series of *Poems and Ballads* is an outstanding illustration, Swinburne's outlook on life is frankly pagan and hedonistic. The hue and cry when these lyrics were first published, culminating in the savage diatribe of Robert

Buchanan on *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, has since led to a natural extreme of reaction. The poems which the mid-Victorians considered bombshells have been represented by modern critics as literary squibs. They are, we are told, the froth of youthful fancy, the idle dreams of a schoolboy, brain frenzies "of imagination all compact." Yet, to regard such writings as mere "literary exercises," or echoes of Swinburne's reading of the poetry of Catullus, Baudelaire, and Rossetti, is to miss the full significance of their basis in a genuine emotional experience. While it would be impertinent to attempt to construct a biography of the poet from *Poems and Ballads*, or to interpret literally all his perfervid rhapsodies, it is necessary, in the interests of artistic truth, to protest against the view that these works are without any foothold in reality. No one who is familiar with the salient facts of Swinburne's life, or has appreciated the vividness and sincerity of his portrayal of certain types of emotional reaction, can doubt that he, like John Donne, had drunk from that fountain whose waters are both bitter and sweet, and felt his pulses throb with the spirit of his own passionate invocation:

By the hunger of change and emotion,
By the thirst of unbearable things,
By despair, the twin-born of devotion,
By the pleasure that winces and stings,
The delight that consumes the desire,
The desire that outruns the delight,
By the cruelty deaf as a fire
And blind as the night,

Swinburne is a master in depicting the momentary ebb and flow of passion, so eminently characteristic of emotions which begin and end with the gratification of the senses. Running throughout these poems are constantly alternating moods of revolt and apathy, ecstasy and world weariness, feverish joys and dull satiety. The clash of opposites is reflected even in the prevailing antithetical structure of the verse. Yet, if Swinburne, like Keats, seems to long "for a life of sensations rather than thoughts," there are elements

in his earlier poetry which do much to purge it of the grosser aspects of physical passion. Though his moods are those of a sensationalist, they give birth to ideas out of which the poet, more or less consciously, constructs what might be called a philosophy of the emotions. In the process, these ideas are unified by a controlling temper of mind, impatient of convention, but sincere and courageous, even heroic in quality. In addition, their significance is deepened and enriched by certain literary associations, more particularly the poignant expression of a similar reaction to the fever and the fret of human life, in Greek dramatic and lyric poetry.

Swinburne might have taken for the motto of his youthful poems the famous saying of Heraclitus, "All things are in a state of flux and nothing abides." Beauty and love are subject to change and vicissitude throughout life and are finally engulfed by death. No faith in the Christian hope of immortality lightens the tragedy of this inevitable fate. In his view of the finality of death the poet is unreservedly pagan.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

But, as torches shine more brightly in the gloom, the poet regards the worth of beauty and love as enhanced by being set over against the dark background of the forces that constantly threaten to overwhelm them.

The ecstasies of life are fleeting sensations, ever in peril of annihilation, yet this very fact adds to the vividness and preciousness of the moments in which we experience them. If beauty and love were secure and stable they would lack all spice, thrill, and adventurousness.

Life is the theatre of a tragic conflict, but it is "the sense of tears in mortal things" that is the source of the poignancy

and richness of man's emotional experience, and that gives opportunity for heroism and nobility of soul. The mettle and energy of Swinburne's native temperament transfigure his sensationalist point of view, so that he escapes the dangers of despondency and Epicureanism.

As John Drinkwater has expressed it, in his masterly summing up of the poet's lyric thought in this particular connection:

"The most insistent motive in Swinburne's art is the exultant acceptance of the tragic significance of life. He sings delightedly the eternal opposition of beauty to change and defeat and death, not desiring at all that this conflict should be quelled, knowing that without it man's most heroic faculty would stale."

Swinburne's attitude with regard to the fundamental problems of religion, throughout his earlier writings, is to a great extent determined by his revolt against the inexorable, inscrutable forces that seem to war against the beauty and loveliness of life and, in the end, consign it to death and oblivion. At times he identifies "God" or "the Gods" with these hostile forces, at times he conceives of a Power or Powers beyond these, ironically indifferent to the passions and sufferings of men.

Do the high gods know or the great gods care?
Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,
Should ¹ the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or day be,
Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

Swinburne's view of religion is also inseparably bound up with his neo-paganism. In certain poems his rebellion against the ascetic spirit of mediævalism takes the form of a contrast between pagan and Christian ideals, as, for example, in "The Hymn to Proserpine." In particular, he was greatly

¹ Customarily but incorrectly printed "Would." One of the four typographical errors in standard English editions of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866) noted in Thomas J. Wise's *Bibliography of the Writings of Swinburne*.

influenced by the sublime representation of Fate, in Greek drama, with its noble portrayal of man's heroic though un-availing struggle against the nemesis that lies in wait for his footsteps. In the choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*, and in "Anactoria," his protest against the tyranny of "oppressive heaven" reaches its climax. Here he surpasses Byron and Shelley, in uncompromising and bitter denunciation of the supreme Power that fashions the destinies of men.

The fine "Prelude," to the volume of 1871 reveals how conscious Swinburne was of the contrast between the sensuous passion that is the prevailing motif of *Poems and Ballads* (1866), and the enthusiasm for the cause of freedom, that is the animating strain of *Songs before Sunrise*.

While still maintaining his attitude of revolt against the creeds and ecclesiastical polity of religion, the poet finds in freedom, as a sovereign principle of man's soul, something that is godlike and abiding, and worthy to be the guiding star of life. Thus Liberty is apostrophized as divinity:

Mother of man's time-travelling generations,
Breath of his nostrils, heartblood of his heart,
God above all Gods worshipped of all nations,
Light above light, law beyond law, thou art.

The choice spirits of mankind are they who rise above sensuous indulgence and self-absorption to consecrate their being to the ideal of freedom. Moreover, the progress of humanity is in itself divine, in so far as this represents the dawning of the sun of freedom upon the world, and the gradual realization of the native capacities of the soul. It is in and through the dedication of the individual to the liberation of the human race that he becomes clearly conscious of freedom as the central fire of his own personality. In "The Pilgrims," Swinburne has given a noble and artistic expression of this thought. On the road of toil and self-sacrifice the heroes and martyrs of liberty pass singing. Loftily scorning suffering and death, they hymn the praises of their "lady of love," a symbol of universal humanity.

Pushing this conception to an extreme, Swinburne would

enthroned the soul of man, with freedom its essential attribute, as the supreme representative of divinity. In a letter to Edmund Stedman regarding his attitude towards religious belief he wrote: "But we who worship no material incarnation of any qualities, no person, may worship the Divine humanity, the ideal of human perfection and aspiration, without worshipping any god, any person, any fetish at all." The "Hymn of Man," with its exultant refrain, "Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things," reads like a rendition of the *Catéchisme positiviste*, and the "religion of humanity" has seldom been presented in a balder or more audacious fashion.

Swinburne, along with George Eliot and J. Stuart Mill, represent the chief literary examples of the influence of Positivism in the Victorian epoch. But in "Hertha," which ranks with "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and "The Hound of Heaven," as one of the great metaphysical poems of the nineteenth century, the poet rises above the limitations of the narrow and rigid positivism that pervades the "Hymn of Man." Though Man is still thought of as the highest manifestation of the divine, Swinburne's vision sweeps out to embrace that infinite cosmic process, which is the pulsebeat of the universe. There are few passages in Victorian literature that equal in power and sublimity the description in "Hertha" of the world soul, under the figure of Igdrasil, the tree of existence.

My own blood is what staunches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,

And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires
as a spark. . . .

The storm winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,

Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms
increase. . . .

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;

Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

Here, while man is regarded as crowning the process of evolution, the perception of his life as an element in a larger order subtly transforms Swinburne's deification of humanity by merging it in a grander ideal. In "Hertha" the poet's vision becomes truly transcendental, and the heroic and imperishable attributes of man's soul are conceived of as a part of the universal revelation of spirit, a radiation of "that Beauty in which all things work and move."

WILLIAM O. RAYMOND.

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.

November, 1924.

SELECTIONS FROM SWINBURNE

MAIDEN, AND MISTRESS OF THE MONTHS AND STARS

INVOCATION OF THE CHIEF HUNTSMAN

(From *Atalanta in Calydon*)

MAIDEN, and mistress of the months and stars
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,
Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,
Being treble in thy divided deity,
A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot
Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand
To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range
Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep;
Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,
But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam
Hidden and shown in heaven; for I all night
Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men
Have wrought and worshipped toward thee; nor shall man
See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears;
But for the end, that lies unreached as yet
Between the hands and on the knees of gods.
O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews
And dreams and desolation of the night!
Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow
Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,
And burn and break the dark about thy ways,
Shot through and through with arrows; let thine hair
Lighten as flame above that flameless shell
Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world
And thy lips kindle with swift beams; let earth
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs

And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow;
And all the winds about thee with their wings,
And fountain-heads of all the watered world;
Each horn of Acheloüs, and the green
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.
For in fair time thou comest; come also thou,
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done
And bloodless altars without wine or fire.
Him now consume thou; for thy sacrifice
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,
Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænalus
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armed king,
Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,
From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus
Won from the roaring river and labouring sea
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled
And foamed and lessened through his wrathful fords,
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,
These virgins with the lightening of the day
Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,
Clean offering, and chaste hymns; but me the time
Divides from these things; whom do thou not less
Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING

(Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*)

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamour of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
 Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
 The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
 From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
 And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
 And the oat is heard above the lyre,
 And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
 The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
 Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
 Follows with dancing and fills with delight
 The Mænad and the Bassarid;
 And soft as lips that laugh and hide
 The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
 And screen from seeing and leave in sight
 The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
 The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
 Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
 The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
 But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
 To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
 The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

1865.

BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS

(Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*)

BEFORE the beginning of years
 There came to the making of man
 Time, with a gift of tears;
 Grief, with a glass that ran;
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
 Summer, with flowers that fell;

Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the labouring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labour and thought,
A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;

In his heart is a blind desire,
 In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
 He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
 Sows, and he shall not reap;
 His life is a watch or a vision
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

1865.

WE HAVE SEEN THEE, O LOVE

(Part of Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*)

WE have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly,
 O Love;
 Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
 Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
 Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
 Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
 Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
 And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
 Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
 As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
 But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

1865.

WHO HATH GIVEN MAN SPEECH?

(Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*)

WHO hath given man speech? or who hath set therein
 A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?
 For in the word his life is and his breath,
 And in the word his death,
 That madness and the infatuate heart may breed
 From the word's womb the deed
 And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,
 Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—
 Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,

Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he
Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care
And mutable as sand,
But death is strong and full of blood and fair
And perdurable and like a lord of land?
Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see
Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand
And thy life-days from thee.
For the gods very subtly fashion
Madness with sadness upon earth:
Not knowing in any wise compassion,
Nor holding pity of any worth;
And many things they have given and taken,
And wrought and ruined many things;
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,
And sealed the sea with all her springs;
They have wearied time with heavy burdens
And vexed the lips of life with breath:
Set men to labour and given them guerdons,
Death, and great darkness after death:
Put moans into the bridal measure
And on the bridal wools a stain;
And circled pain about with pleasure,
And girdled pleasure about with pain;
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire
For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours?
Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven
To bathe the brows of morning? or like flowers
Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,
Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven?
Or rather, O our masters, shall they be
Food for the famine of the grievous sea,
A great well-head of lamentation
Satiating the sad gods? or fall and flow
Among the years and seasons to and fro,
And wash their feet with tribulation

And fill them full with grieving ere they go?

Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,
Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold

But all we smite thereat in vain;

Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,

But all the floors are paven with our pain.

Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,

With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,

We labour, and are clad and fed with grief

And filled with days we would not fain behold

And nights we would not hear of; we wax old,

All we wax old and wither like a leaf.

We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and moon;

Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,

Black flowers and white, that perish; and the noon

As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.

A little fruit a little while is ours,

And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one

Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,

Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done,

And stir with soft imperishable breath

The bubbling bitterness of life and death,

And hold it to our lips and laugh; but they

Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,

Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,

The lips that made us and the hands that slay;

Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to none,

Change and be subject to the secular sway

And terrene revolution of the sun.

Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet

With multitudinous days and nights and tears

And many mixing savours of strange years,

Were no more trodden of them under feet,

Cast out and spilt about their holy places:

That life were given them as a fruit to eat
And death to drink as water; that the light
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night

Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.

That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,
One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain;

Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be

Awile as all things born with us and we,

And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them; but one saith

The gods are gracious, praising God; and one,

When hast thou seen? or hast thou felt his breath

Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,

Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death?

None hath beheld him, none

Seen above other gods and shapes of things,

Swift without feet and flying without wings,

Intolerable, not clad with death or life,

Insatiable, not known of night or day,

The lord of love and loathing and of strife

Who gives a star and takes a sun away;

Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife

To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay;

Who turns the large limbs to a little flame

And binds the great sea with a little sand;

Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame;

Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand;

Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,

Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,

Smites without sword, and scourges without rod;

The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,

One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,

And made us transitory and hazardous,

Light things and slight;

Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made man thus,
And he doeth right.

Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten; thou hast laid
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,
Live: and again thou hast said, Yield up your breath,
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.

Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with dreams,
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be;

Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant streams,
In the end thou hast made them bitter with the sea.

Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men;

Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears;

Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again;

With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and ears.

Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and we
Feeble; and thou art against us, and thine hand

Constrains us in the shallows of the sea

And breaks us at the limits of the land;

Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,

And loosed the hours like arrows; and let fall

Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe

And wars among us, and one end of all;

Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet

Are as a rushing water when the skies

Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat

And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes;

Because thou art over all who are over us;

Because thy name is life and our name death;

Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,

And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth;

Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,

Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,

At least we witness of thee ere we die

That these things are not otherwise, but thus;

That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,

That all men even as I,

All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high.

But ye, keep ye on earth
Your lips from over-speech,
Loud words and longing are so little worth;
And the end is hard to reach.
For silence after grievous things is good,
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,
And shame, and righteous governance of blood,
And lordship of the soul.
But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root;
For words divide and rend;
But silence is most noble till the end.

1865.

O THAT I NOW, I TOO WERE

(Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*)

O THAT I now, I too were
By deep wells and water-floods,
Streams of ancient hills, and where
All the wan green places bear
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,
Or such darkest ivy-buds
As divide thy yellow hair,
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare
Snow-soft shoulders of a god;
There the year is sweet, and there
Earth is full of secret springs,
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,
Those that marry dawn and noon,
There are sunless, there look pale
In dim leaves and hidden air,
Pale as grass or latter flowers
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings
Full of dew beneath the moon,

And all day the nightingale
Sleeps, and all night sings;
There in cold remote recesses
That nor alien eyes assail,
Feet, nor imminence of wings,
Nor a wind nor any tune,
Thou, O queen and holiest,
Flower the whitest of all things,
With reluctant lengthening tresses
And with sudden splendid breast
Save of maidens un beholden,
There are wont to enter, there
Thy divine swift limbs and golden
Maiden growth of unbound hair,
Bathed in waters white,
Shine, and many a maid's by thee
In moist woodland or the hilly
Flowerless brakes where wells abound
Out of all men's sight;
Or in lower pools that see
All their margins clothed all round
With the innumerable lily,
Whence the golden-girdled bee
Flits through flowering rush to fret
White or duskier violet,
Fair as those that in far years
With their buds left luminous
And their little leaves made wet,
From the warmer dew of tears,
Mother's tears in extreme need,
Hid the limbs of Iamus,
Of thy brother's seed;
For his heart was piteous
Toward him, even as thine heart now
Pitiful toward us;
Thine, O goddess, turning hither
A benignant blameless brow;
Seeing enough of evil done

And lives withered as leaves wither
In the blasting of the sun;
Seeing enough of hunters dead,
Ruin enough of all our year,
Herds and harvests slain and shed,
Herdsmen stricken many an one,
Fruits and flocks consumed together,
And great length of deadly days.
Yet with reverent lips and fear
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise
For this lightening of clear weather
And prosperities begun.
For not seldom, when all air
As bright water without breath
Shines, and when men fear not, fate
Without thunder unaware
Breaks, and brings down death.
Joy with grief ye great gods give,
Good with bad, and overbear
All the pride of us that live,
All the high estate,
As ye long since overbore,
As in old time long before,
Many a strong man and a great,
All that were.
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,
Having heed of all our prayer,
Taking note of all our sighs;
We beseech thee by thy light,
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,
And the kingdom of the night,
Be thou favourable and fair;
By thine arrows and thy might
And Orion overthrown;
By the maiden thy delight,
By the indissoluble zone
And the sacred hair.

THE DEATH OF MELEAGER

(From *Atalanta in Calydon*)

MELEAGER

LET your hands meet
 Round the weight of my head;
 Lift ye my feet
 As the feet of the dead;

For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it molten as lead.

CHORUS

O thy luminous face,
 Thine imperious eyes!
 O the grief, O the grace,
 As of day when it dies!

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and suppression of sighs?

MELEAGER

Is a bride so fair?
 Is a maid so meek?
 With unchapleted hair,
 With unfilleted cheek,

Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as blessing to speak.

ATALANTA

I would that with feet
 Unsandalled, unshod,
 Overbold, overfleet,
 I had swum not nor trod

From Arcadia to Calydon, northward, a blast of the envy of God.

MELEAGER

Unto each man his fate;
 Unto each as he saith
 In whose fingers the weight
 Of the world is as breath;

Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had laid hold upon death.

CHORUS

Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,

Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with travail and
labour and fear.

MELEAGER

Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,

With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a crown
on my brows!

CHORUS

Whence art thou sent from us?
Whither thy goal?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,

As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering of
body and soul!

MELEAGER

My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me,
Without lute, without lyre,

Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were ill
to desire.

CHORUS

Who shall raise thee
From the house of the dead?
Or what man praise thee
That thy praise may be said?

Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

MELEAGER

But thou, O mother,
The dreamer of dreams,
Wilt thou bring forth another
To feel the sun's beams
When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by im-
passable streams?

CENEUS

What thing wilt thou leave me
Now this thing is done?
A man wilt thou give me,
A son for my son,
For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the desirable
one?

CHORUS

Thou wert glad above others,
Yea, fair beyond word;
Thou wert glad among mothers;
For each man that heard
Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings to the
feet of a bird.

CENEUS

Who shall give back
Thy face of old years
With travail made black,
Grown gray among fears,
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

MELEAGER

Though thou art as fire
Fed with fuel in vain,
My delight, my desire,
Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are that
live without stain.

ATALANTA

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawed,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn

Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made
dark in thy dawn.

CHORUS

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again
Nor endured he thy face

Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light from
a terrible place.

CENEUS

Thou shouldst die as he dies
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears

With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty, the
splendour of spears.

CHORUS

In the ears of the world
It is sung, it is told,
And the light thereof hurled
And the noise thereof rolled

From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece of gold.

MELEAGER

Would God ye could carry me
Forth of all these;
Heap sand and bury me
By the Chersonese

Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of
Pontic seas.

CENEUS

Dost thou mock at our praise
 And the singing begun
 And the men of strange days
 Praising my son
 In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon?

MELEAGER

For the dead man no home is;
 Ah, better to be
 What the flower of the foam is
 In fields of the sea,
 That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-stream
 a garment for me.

CHORUS

Who shall seek thee and bring
 And restore thee thy day,
 When the dove dipt her wing
 And the oars won their way
 Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits of
 Propontis with spray?

MELEAGER

Will ye crown me my tomb
 Or exalt me my name,
 Now my spirits consume,
 Now my flesh is a flame?
 Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping to
 praise me or shame.

CHORUS

Turn back now, turn thee,
 As who turns him to wake;
 Though the life in thee burn thee,
 Couldst thou bathe it and slake
 Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east upon
 west waters break?

MELEAGER

Would the winds blow me back

Or the waves hurl me home?

Ah, to touch in the track

Where the pine learnt to roam

Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms of
water and foam!

CHORUS

The gods may release

That they made fast;

Thy soul shall have ease

In thy limbs at the last;

But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is over-
past?

MELEAGER

Not the life of men's veins,

Not of flesh that conceives;

But the grace that remains,

The fair beauty that cleaves

To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the dews on
the leaves.

CHORUS

Thou wert helmsman and chief;

Wilt thou turn in an hour,

Thy limbs to the leaf,

Thy face to the flower,

Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide
and devour?

MELEAGER

The years are hungry,

They wail all their days;

The gods wax angry

And weary of praise;

And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straiten their
ways?

CHORUS

The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfill herself wholly, to darken man's face
before God.

1865.

BETWEEN THE SUNSET AND THE SEA

BETWEEN the sunset and the sea
My love laid hands and lips on me;
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,
Of long desire came brief delight:
Ah love, and what thing came of thee
Between the sea-downs and the sea?

Between the sea-mark and the sea
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,
And dead delight to new desire;
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be
Between the sea-sand and the sea.

Between the sundown and the sea
Love watched one hour of love with me;
Then down the all-golden water-ways
His feet flew after yesterdays;
I saw them come and saw them flee
Between the sea-foam and the sea.

Between the sea-strand and the sea
Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me;
The first star saw twain turn to one
Between the moonrise and the sun;
The next, that saw not love, saw me
Between the sea-banks and the sea.

1865.

A BALLAD OF LIFE

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,
Full of sweet trees and colour of glad grass,
In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.
Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,
Made my blood burn and swoon
Like a flame rained upon.
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids' blue,
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through
Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,
Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-coloured hair
Of some dead lute player
That in dead years had done delicious things.
The seven strings were named accordingly;
The first string charity,
The second tenderness,
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,
And loving kindness, that is pity's kin
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet;
And with plucked ears of wheat
The first man's hair was wound upon his head:
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad;
All his gold garment had
Pale stains of dust and rust.
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes;
The token of him being upon this wise
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face
Coloured like green wood when flame kindles it.
He hath such feeble feet

They may not well endure in any place.
His face was full of grey old miseries,
And all his blood's increase
Was even increase of pain.
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death;
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me; This is marvellous,
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate
Nor the sun's grace so great,
If sin and she be kin or amorous.
And seeing where maidens served her on their knees,
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.
Then Fear said: I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said: I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue;
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead;
Great glad mouths open and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Then I said: Now assuredly I see
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth
All sin and sorrow and death,
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides;
Or as her sweet white sides
And bosom carved to kiss.

Now therefore, if her pity further me,
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat
Where the least thornprick harms;
And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,
Come thou before my lady and say this;
Borgia, thy gold hair's colour burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes;
Therefore so many as these roses be,
Kiss me so many times.
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,
That she will stoop herself none otherwise
Than a blown vine-branch doth,
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

1866.

A BALLAD OF DEATH

KNEEL down, fair Love, and fill thyself with tears,
Girdle thyself with sighing for a girth
Upon the sides of mirth,
Cover thy lips and eyelids, let thine ears
Be filled with rumour of people sorrowing;
Make thee soft raiment out of woven sighs
Upon the flesh to cleave,
Set pains therein and many a grievous thing,
And many sorrows after each his wise
For armlet and for gorget and for sleeve.

O Love's lute heard about the lands of death,
Left hanged upon the trees that were therein;
O Love and Time and Sin,
Three singing mouths that mourn now underbreath,
Three lovers, each one evil spoken of;

O smitten lips wherethrough this voice of mine
Came softer with her praise;
Abide a little for our lady's love.
The kisses of her mouth were more than wine,
And more than peace the passage of her days.

O Love, thou knowest if she were good to see.
O Time, thou shalt not find in any land
Till, cast out of thine hand,
The sunlight and the moonlight fail from thee,
Another woman fashioned like as this.
O Sin, thou knowest that all thy shame in her
Was made a goodly thing;
Yea, she caught Shame and shamed him with her kiss,
With her fair kiss, and lips much lovelier
Than lips of amorous roses in late spring.

By night there stood over against my bed
Queen Venus with a hood striped gold and black,
Both sides drawn fully back
From brows wherein the sad blood failed of red,
And temples drained of purple and full of death.
Her curled hair had the wave of sea-water
And the sea's gold in it.
Her eyes were as a dove's that sickeneth.
Strewn dust of gold she had shed over her,
And pearl and purple and amber on her feet.

Upon her raiment of dyed sendaline
Were painted all the secret ways of love
And covered things thereof,
That hold delight as grape-flowers hold their wine;
Red mouths of maidens and red feet of doves,
And brides that kept within the bride-chamber
Their garment of soft shame,
And weeping faces of the wearied loves
That swoon in sleep and awake wearier,
With heat of lips and hair shed out like flame.

The tears that through her eyelids fell on me
Made mine own bitter where they ran between
As blood had fallen therein,
She saying; Arise, lift up thine eyes and see
If any glad thing be or any good
Now the best thing is taken forth of us;
Even she to whom all praise
Was as one flower in a great multitude,
One glorious flower of many and glorious,
One day found gracious among many days:

Even she whose handmaiden was Love—to whom
At kissing times across her stateliest bed
Kings bowed themselves and shed
Pale wine, and honey with the honeycomb,
And spikenard bruised for a burnt-offering;
Even she between whose lips the kiss became
As fire and frankincense;
Whose hair was as gold raiment on a king,
Whose eyes were as the morning purged with flame,
Whose eyelids as sweet savour issuing thence.

Then I beheld, and lo on the other side
My lady's likeness crowned and robed and dead.
Sweet still, but now not red,
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died.
And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade,
The great curled eyelids that withheld her eyes.
And sweet, but like spoilt gold,
The weight of colour in her tresses weighed.
And sweet, but as a vesture with new dyes,
The body that was clothed with love of old.

Ah! that my tears filled all her woven hair
And all the hollow bosom of her gown—
Ah! that my tears ran down
Even to the place where many kisses were,
Even where her parted breast-flowers have place,

Even where they :re cloven apart—who knows not this?
 Ah! the flowers cleave apart
 And their sweet fills the tender interspace;
 Ah! the leaves grown thereof were things to kiss
 Ere their fine gold was tarnished at the heart.

Ah! in the days when God did good to me,
 Each part about her was a righteous thing;
 Her mouth an almsgiving,
 The glory of her garments charity,
 The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
 In the good days when God kept sight of us;
 Love lay upon her eyes,
 And on that hair whereof the world takes heed;
 And all her body was more virtuous
 Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands
 And sheaves of briar and many rusted sheaves
 Rain-rotten in rank lands,
 Waste marigold and late unhappy leaves
 And grass that fades ere any of it be mown;
 And when thy bosom is filled full thereof
 Seek out Death's face ere the light altereth,
 And say "My master that was thrall to Love
 Is become thrall to Death."
 Bow down before him, ballad, sigh and groan,
 But make no sojourn in thy outgoing;
 For haply it may be
 That when thy feet return at evening
 Death shall come in with thee.

1866.

LAUS VENERIS

ASLEEP or waking is it? for her neck,
 Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck
 Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;
 Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her face;
Her eyelids are so peaceable, no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;
The old grey years were parcels of her might;
The strewings of the ways wherein she trod
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!
And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
The scented dusty daylight burns the air,
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies
With my love laid upon her garment-wise,
Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands
Hanging asleep; hard by her head there stands,
Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh like fire,
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume
From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire;
There stands he, like one labouring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across; and every thread
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red;
Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;
Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,
Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire; the heavy lights run low,
And as they drop, my blood and body so
Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my head,
That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,
My body broken as a turning wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas!

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a name,
That death were not more pitiful than desire,
That these things were not one thing and the same!

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:
For each man hath some space of years, he saith,
 A little space of time ere time expire,
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
 And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,
As any herb or leaf of any tree,
 As men that toil through hours of labouring night,
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men;
For at the gold bars of the gates again
 I heard all night and all the hours of it
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;
 And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make
The very soul in all my senses ache;
 The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
 Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat;
 But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire;
Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,
With heavy kisses and with happy breath;
Not as man lies by woman, when the bride
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith.

For she lies, laughing low with love; she lies
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,
To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were
Slain in the old time, having found her fair;
Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain:
She casts them forth and gathers them again;
With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,
Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires;
Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,
The langour in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
Her doors are made with music, and barred round
With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain;
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain;
The body and the spirit in her ears
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth; yea, every man save me;
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell;
Me, satiated with things insatiable;
Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty! for thy mouth's sweet sake
My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake
As water, as the flesh of men that weep,
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips
Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips;
Ah, God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,
But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways
Rung by the running fingers of the wind;
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,
And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light;
Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,
Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,
Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof
Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins;
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove
An hour since, and what mark of me remains?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin;
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust
Into the pit? yet had I a good trust
To save my soul before it slipped therein,
Trodden under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,
I look between the iron sides of death
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,
The singing folk with all their lute-playings;
There when one cometh he shall have to friend
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,
Grown grey and black now, brought unto the dust,
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them; they sit
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,
Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust,
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is,
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss,
 Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold;
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis,

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed;
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed;
 Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine;
But in all these there was no sin like mine;
 No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light;
 I can well see, for all the dusty days
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;
 The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
 Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
 Leaving all colours in them brown and red
And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughs following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
 For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little; I do know
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,
 Their savour is all turned now into tears;
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow,

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine
 Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air; right gladly then
I rode alone, a great way off my men,
 And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one;
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun
 Some certain of my foe's men, for his three
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks—alack,
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black;
 The slaying of him was a joy to see:
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief
Would beat when he had drunken; yet small grief
 Hath any for the ridding of such knaves;
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,
 Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves;
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

As one that hath a plague-mark on his brows;
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house
 Down under earth; sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,

And their quenched savour leaves the whole soul weak,
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,

And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds,

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,

And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decease
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase

One upon one, of all sweet finished things;
The breaking of the battle; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair;

The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof;
"Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love

Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

"The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss

Of blinded eyelids that expand again—
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

"Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown
Of one same fire and colour with their own;

Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not;
"Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
 This man and that finds favour in his eyes,"
I said, "but I, what guerdon have I got?

"The dust of praise that is blown everywhere
In all men's faces with the common air;
 The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet
Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing;
I had no hope but of some evil thing,
 And so rode slowly past the windy wheat
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see
 The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass;
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,
 The beauty of her body and her sin,
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!

Alas! for sorrow is all the end of this.
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is!
 O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
 The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss:
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss
 Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours;
And let the dove's beak fret and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands
Were hot about me; yea, God brake my bands
To save my soul alive, and I came forth
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence
Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense;
Howbeit I met folk riding from the north
Towards Rome, to purge them of their souls' offence.

And rode with them, and spake to none; the day
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,
And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight;
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled; till before us rose and fell
White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell
Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,
Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath;
Nathless we won well past that hell and death,
Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees
Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys
To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,
Saying, "Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,
The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

"Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod
More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

"Before mine eyes; yea, for my sake I wot
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot
Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,
Giving me cheer; which thing availed me not;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said;
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead
Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard
The crying of his voice across my head.

"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,
Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight,
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been?
Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,
There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead stem,
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,
There is not one sound thing in all thereof;
Though he search all my veins through, searching them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
As when she came out of the naked sea
 Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
 And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savour of crushed fruit,
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
 For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
Charred frankincense and grated sandal-root.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,
 Feeling her face with all her eager hair
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them;
As after death I know that such-like flame
 Shall cleave to me for ever; yea, what care,
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same?

Ah love, there is no better life than this;
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
 And afterward be cast out of God's sight;
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
 Remembering love and all the dead delight,
And all that time was sweet with for a space?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
 One from another; I hold thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,
 Abiding alway out of all men's sight
 Until God loosen over sea and land
 The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS

1866.

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

BEFORE our lives divide for ever,
 While time is with us and hands are free,
 (Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever
 Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea)
 I will say no word that a man might say
 Whose whole life's love goes down in a day;
 For this could never have been; and never,
 Though the gods and the years relent, shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
 To think of things that are well outworn?
 Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
 The dream foregone and the deed forborne?
 Though joy be done with and grief be vain,
 Time shall not sever us wholly in twain;
 Earth is not spoilt for a single shower;
 But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my heart,
 Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.
 The singing seasons divide and depart,
 Winter and summer depart in twain.
 It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,
 The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
 Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet smart,
 With sullen savour of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
 I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.
 Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,

This wild new growth of the corn and vine,
This wine and bread without lees or leaven,
We had grown as gods, as the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things,
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,
Covered with love as a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,
O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean.
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast
Soul to soul while the years fell past;
Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
Had the chance been with us that has not been.

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,
Days that are over, dreams that are done.
Though we seek life through, we shall surely find
There is none of them clear to us now, not one.
But clear are these things; the grass and the sand,
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain;
No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;

The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours.
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.
I would we twain were even as she,
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,
Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,
They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.
Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.
I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life, in the straits of time,
Who swims in sight of the great third wave
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb.
Some waif washed up with the strays and spars
That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the stars;
Weed from the water, grass from a grave,
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least word said.
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
Broken it up for your daily bread:
Body for body and blood for blood,
As the flow of the full sea risen to flood
That yearns and trembles before it sink,
I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,
And time at fullest and all his dower,
I had given you surely, and life to boot,
Were we once made one for a single hour.
But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,
Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;
And deep in one is the bitter root,
And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung
To my life if you bade me, played my part
As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,
The dreams that smote with a keener dart
Than shafts of love or arrows of death;
These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,
Out of the world's way, out of the light,
Out of the ages of worldly weather,
Forgotten of all men altogether,
As the world's first dead, taken wholly away,
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews!
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;
For what shall it profit when men are dead
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's might,
To have looked for day when the day was fled?

Let come what will, there is one thing worth,
To have had fair love in the life upon earth:
To have held love safe till the day grew night,
While skies had colour and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you then,
If I lose you now that my heart has need?
And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?
Lose life, lose all; but at least I know,
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again,
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,
Mixed into me as honey in wine,
Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,
Nor all strong things had severed us then;
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,
You had grown strong as the sun or the sea.
But none shall triumph a whole life through:
For death is one, and the fates are three.
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,
There are worse things waiting for men than death;
Death could not sever my soul and you,
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance they sent you,
Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer.
But will it not one day in heaven repent you?
Will they solace you wholly, the days that were?
Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,
Meet mine, and see where the great love is,
And tremble and turn and be changed? Content you;
The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,
Had you seen good such a thing were done,
I too might have stood with the souls that stand.
In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun;
But who now on earth need care how I live?
Have the high gods anything left to give,
Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?
Which gifts are goodly; but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,
There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.
My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled
Round and round in a gulf of the sea;
And still, through the sound and the straining stream,
Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,
The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,
And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.
Would I have you change now, change at a blow,
Startled and stricken, awake and aware?
Yea, if I could, would I have you see
My very love of you filling me,
And know my soul to the quick, as I know
The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,
Would I change my sweet one love with a word?
I had rather your hair should change in a night,
Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;
Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,
Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,
Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,
Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears;

I have found a way for the failing feet,
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;
There is no rumour about the place,
Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said
"Let none take pity upon thee, none
Comfort thy crying: for lo, thou art dead,
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.
Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous thought,
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,
And sweet light visions of things undone?"

"I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh,
And gold, and beautiful burial things.
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;
Is not thy grave as a royal king's?
Fret not thyself though the end were sore;
Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.
Sleep; what hast thou to do with her?
The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,
The misconceived and the misbegotten,
I would find a sin to do ere I die,
Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,
That would set you higher in heaven, serve you
And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns through me,
I am swift to follow you, keen to see;
But love lacks might to redeem or undo me;
As I have been, I know I shall surely be;
"What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,
My part were worse if I chose to play;
For the worst is this after all; if they knew me,
Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,
If you saw with your soul what man am I,
You would praise me at least that my soul all through
Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;
The souls and lips that are bought and sold,
The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may be;
But I, that I love you and find you fair,
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they be,
Do the high gods know or the great gods care?
Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,
Should the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or day be,
Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;

Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,
Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
 With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
 Were it once cast off and unwound from me,
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
 Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
 A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
 Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say.
Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;
 Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.
But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O sea,
But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,
 Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
 Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.
The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,
 Shall they not vanish away and apart?
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;
Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;
Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;
 From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I know.
 As things that are not shall these things be;
We shall live through seasons of sun and of snow,
 And none be grievous as this to me.
We shall hear, as one in a trance that hears,
The sound of time, the rhyme of the years;
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will grow
 As tender things of a spring-tide sea.

Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that hiss,
Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.
And all time past, was it all for this?

Times unforgotten, and treasures of things?
Swift years of liking, and sweet long laughter,
That wist not well of the years thereafter
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a kiss,
With lips that trembled and trailing wings?

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but she.
And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:
For she bowed down to him weeping, and said
"Live;" and her tears were shed on his face
Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung
Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a space;
And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.
Be well content as the years wear through;
Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest and be glad of the gods; but I,
How shall I praise them, or how take rest?
There is not room under all the sky
For me that know not of worst or best,

Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.
Love will not come to me now though I die,
As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
As a wave of the sea turned back by song.
There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife;
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
Balm of the wound and heft of the knife.
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet word,
The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,

Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low?
Come life, come death, not a word be said;
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead?
I never shall tell you on earth; and in heaven,
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know?

1866.

A LEAVE-TAKING

LET us go hence, my songs; she will not hear.
Let us go hence together without fear;
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is here?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence; she will not weep.
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle and reap."
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow;
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest; she will not love.
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down; she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see.
Sing all once more together; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see.

1866.

ITYLUS

SWALLOW, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?

Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
 The heart's division divideth us.
 Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
 But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
 To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
 The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
 I pray thee sing not a little space.
 Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
 The woven web that was plain to follow,
 The small slain body, the flowerlike face,
 Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
 The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
 The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
 Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
 But the world shall end when I forget.

1866.

ANACTORIA

τίνος αὖ τὸ πειθοῖ
 μὰς σαγηνεύσας φιλότατα;

SAPPHO.

My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
 Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
 Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,
 And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound.
 I pray thee sigh not, speak not, draw not breath;
 Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.
 I would the sea had hidden us, the fire
 (Wilt thou fear that, and fear not my desire?)
 Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,
 And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves.
 I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain

Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour.
Why wilt thou follow lesser loves? are thine
Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?
I charge thee for my life's sake, O too sweet
To crush love with thy cruel faultless feet,
I charge thee keep thy lips from hers or his,
Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss:
Lest I too lure, a swallow for a dove,
Erotion or Erinna to my love.
I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.
I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device, and superflux of pain;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;
Relapse and reluctance of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.
I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,
Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,
And all the broken kisses salt as brine
That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,
And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours
That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,
Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,
But all the flowerlike white stained round with blue;
The fervent underlid, and that above
Lifted with laughter or abashed with love;
Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,
And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.
Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,
And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine

That Love was born of burns and foams like wine,
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,
Coloured like night at heart, but cloven through
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,
Clothed with deep eyelids under and above—
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love;
Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,
And ruinous lilies in thy languid hair.
Ah, take no thought for Love's sake; shall this be,
And she who loves thy lover not love thee?
Sweet soul, sweet mouth of all that laughs and lives,
Mine is she, very mine; and she forgives.
For I beheld in sleep the light that is
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears;
Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,
Imperishable, upon her storied seat;
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,
A mind of many colours, and a mouth
Of many tunes and kisses; and she bowed,
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,
Bowed down upon me, saying, "Who doth thee wrong,
Sappho?" but thou—thy body is the song,
Thy mouth the music; thou art more than I,
Though my voice die not till the whole world die;
Though men that hear it madden; though love weep,
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead?
Yet the queen laughed from her sweet heart and said:
"Even she that flies shall follow for thy sake,
And she shall give thee gifts that would not take,
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee" (yea, kiss me)
"When thou wouldst not"—when I would not kiss thee!
Ah, more to me than all men as thou art,
Shall not my songs assuage her at the heart?
Ah, sweet to me as life seems sweet to death,

Why should her wrath fill thee with fearful breath?
Nay, sweet, for is she God alone? hath she
Made earth and all the centuries of the sea,
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,
Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,
The young men and the maidens and the gods?
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,
And summer and flower of women and of years?
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon;
Waters that answer waters, fields that wear
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air?
Beyond those flying feet of fluttered doves,
Are there not other gods for other loves?
Yea, though she scourge thee, sweetest, for my sake,
Blossom not thorns and flowers not blood should break.
Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast!
Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!
Ah, ah, thy beauty! like a beast it bites,
Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites.
Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet,
The paces and the pauses of thy feet!
Ah sweeter than all sleep or summer air
The fallen fillets fragrant from thine hair!
Yea, though their alien kisses do me wrong,
Sweeter thy lips than mine with all their song;
Thy shoulders whiter than a fleece of white,
And flower-sweet fingers, good to bruise or bite
As honeycomb of the inmost honey-cells,

With almond-shaped and roseleaf-coloured shells
And blood like purple blossom at the tips
Quivering; and pain made perfect in thy lips
For my sake when I hurt thee; O that I
Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,
Die of thy pain and my delight, and be
Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee!
Would I not plague thee dying overmuch?
Would I not hurt thee perfectly? not touch
Thy pores of sense with torture, and make bright
Thine eyes with bloodlike tears and grievous light?
Strike pang from pang as note is struck from note,
Catch the sob's middle music in thy throat,
Take thy limbs living, and new-mould with these
A lyre of many faultless agonies?
Feed thee with fever and famine and fine drouth,
With perfect pangs convulse thy perfect mouth,
Make thy life shudder in thee and burn afresh,
And wring thy very spirit through the flesh?
Cruel? but love makes all that love him well
As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.
Me hath love made more bitter toward thee
Than death toward man; but were I made as he
Who hath made all things to break them one by one,
If my feet trod upon the stars and sun
And souls of men as his have always trod,
God knows I might be crueller than God.
For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings
The mystery of the cruelty of things?
Or say what God above all gods and years
With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
With lamentation from strange lands, from graves
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,
From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—
With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair
Of comets, desolating the dim air,
When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,

And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light
And travail of the planets of the night,
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?
Is not his incense bitterness, his meat
Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
Threaten and trample all things and every day?
Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,
And life yield up her flower to violent fate?
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death.
Why hath he made us? what had all we done
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?
Thee too the years shall cover; thou shalt be
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,
As a song sung, as a word said, and fall
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;
For never Muse has bound above thine hair
The high Pierian flower whose graft outgrows
All summer kinship of the mortal rose
And colour of deciduous days, nor shed
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,

Except these kisses of my lips on thine
Brand them with immortality; but me—
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold
Cast forth of heaven, with feet of awful gold
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown,
But in the light and laughter, in the moan
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand
And shudder of water that makes felt on land
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,
When all the winds of the world for pure delight
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire;
Like me the one star swooning with desire
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,
As I at thine; like me the waste white noon,
Burnt through with barren sunlight; and like me
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.
I am sick with time as these with ebb and flow,
And by the yearning in my veins I know
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;
And in my heart the grief consuming them
Labours, and in my veins the thirst of these,
And all the summer travail of the trees
And all the winter sickness; and the earth,
Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,
Has pain like mine in her divided breath;
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit
Ashes; her boughs are burdened, and her root
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath

Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed; but I—
Lo, earth may labour, men live long and die,
Years change and stars, and the high God devise
New things, and old things wane before his eyes
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong than they—
But, having made me, me he shall not slay.
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,
Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—
And all these end; he hath his will of these.
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease
This soul of mine as any soul of these,
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make
The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,
The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed
And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,
Of me the high God hath not all his will.
Blossom of branches, and on each high hill
Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales
Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,
Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,
The wan washed sand and the waves' vain desire,
Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words
That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds
Violently singing till the whole world sings—
I Sappho shall be one with all these things,
With all high things for ever; and my face

Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,
 Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof
 With gladness and much sadness and long love.
 Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain
 New things, and never this best thing again;
 Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,
 Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.
 And they shall know me as ye who have known me here,
 Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year
 When I love thee; and they shall praise me, and say
 "She hath all time as all we have our day,
 Shall she not live and have her will"—even I?
 Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.
 For these shall give me of their souls, shall give
 Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,
 Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,
 Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.
 Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew
 Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,
 Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,
 Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease;
 Till time wax faint in all his periods;
 Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,
 And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,
 Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,
 And shed around and over and under me
 Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

1866.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

Vicisti, Galilæe

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love
 hath an end;
 Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
 Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that
 laugh or that weep;

For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?

I am sick of singing: the bays burn deep and chafe: I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a
day!

From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your
chains, men say.

New Gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken
your rods;

They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate
Gods.

But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.

I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall
cease.

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breasts of the nymphs
in the brake;

Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer
breath;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker
like fire.

More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these
things?

Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.

A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.

And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his
tears:

Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his
years?

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown
grey from thy breath;

We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness
of death.

Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not
May.

Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the
end;

For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the
foam of the tides.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and
rods!

O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all
knees bend,

I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf
of the past:

Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote
sea-gates,

Waste water washes, and tall ships foundered, and deep death
waits:

Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas
as with wings,

And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable
things,

White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpen-
tine-curved,

Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the
world.

The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee
away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a
prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's
tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon
hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs
that devour:
And its vapour and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits
to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the
roots of the sea:
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars
of the air:
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and
time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the
high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than
all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon
you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the
changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget
you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords
and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead
art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and
hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down
to thee dead.

Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace
clad around;

Thou art throned where another was king; where another was
queen she is crowned.

Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say
these.

Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of
flowering seas,

Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and
fair as the foam,

And fleetier than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of
Rome.

For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but
ours,

Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet
with her name.

For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected;
but she

Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her
foot on the sea.

And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the view-
less ways,

And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the
bays.

Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should
not fall.

Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye
all.

But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in
the end;

Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of
birth,

I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.

In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the
night where thou art,

Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep over-
flows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the
red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the
flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods
from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a
star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by
the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is
done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our
temporal breath;
For these give labour and slumber; but thou, Proserpina,
death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I
know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span.
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither
weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a
sleep.

1866.

ILICET

THERE is an end of joy and sorrow;
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,
But never a time to laugh or weep.
The end is come of pleasant places,
The end of tender words and faces,
The end of all, the poppied sleep.

¹ ψυχάριον εἰ βαστάζον νεκρόν. ΕΠΙΤΕΤΟΣ.

No place for sound within their hearing,
No room to hope, no time for fearing,
 No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.
The old years have run out all their measure;
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,
 No fragment of the broken years.

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
 There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
 There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,
But Evil saith to Good: My brother,
 My brother, I am one with thee:
They shall not strive nor cry for ever:
No man shall chose between them: never
 Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken;
 None that has lain down shall arise;
The stones are sealed across their places;
One shadow is shed on all their faces,
 One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers
Each face, as each face were his lover's?
 Farewell; as men that sleep fare well.
The grave's mouth laughs unto derision
Desire and dread and dream and vision,
 Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
The names and tribes of you that slumber;
 No memory, no memorial.

“Thou knowest”—who shall say thou knowest?
There is none highest and none lowest:
An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow
To these that shall not have good morrow;
The gods be gentle to all these.
Nay, if death be not, how shall they be?
Nay, is there help in heaven? it may be
All things and lords of things shall cease.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes;
The bronzèd brims are deep in ashes;
The pale old lips of death are fed.
Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter?
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,
At sight of all these poor old dead?

Nay, as thou wilt; these know not of it;
Thine eyes' strong weeping shall not profit,
Thy laughter shall not give thee ease;
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,
Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses
The small dried rows of frankincense;
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,
Flowers coloured like the fire, but colder,
In sign of sweet things taken hence;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favour
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savour
We yield them, spice and flower and wine;
Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,
And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossom,
The slow delicious bright soft blood,
Bathing the spices and the pyre,
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,
Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame has deadened
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened
And warm wet inner petals weep;
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,
Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep? what do ye weeping?
For waking folk and people sleeping,
And sands that fill and sands that fall,
The days rose-red, the popped hours,
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow?
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow?
Shall these give thanks for words or breath?
Their hate is as their loving-kindness;
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder;
He that hath taken, shall he give?
He hath rent them: shall he bind together?
He hath bound them: shall he break the tether?
He hath slain them: shall he bid them live?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;

We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birth-day to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by grey old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens;
They know not what fruits wane or grow;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
How shall thy crying enter there?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter,
The likeness of them shall not alter
For all the rumour of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after,
The tears of latter men, the laughter
Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience,
Endure through days of deathlike date;
They bear the witness of things hidden;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
Nor the graves open for their call.
The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
The popped sleep, the end of all.

1866.

IN THE ORCHARD

(PROVENÇAL BURDEN)

LEAVE go my hands, let me catch breath and see;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me;
Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cool, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
I turn to thee as some green afternoon
Turns toward sunset, and is loth to die;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Lie closer, lean your face upon my side,
Feel where the dew fell that has hardly dried,
Hear how the blood beats that went nigh to swoon;
The pleasure lives there when the sense has died;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

O my fair lord, I charge you leave me this:
Is it not sweeter than a foolish kiss?
Nay take it then, my flower, my first in June,
My rose, so like a tender mouth it is:
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Love, till dawn sunder night from day with fire,
Dividing my delight and my desire,

The crescent life and love the plenilune,
Love me though dusk begin and dark retire;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, my heart fails, my blood draws back; I know,
When life runs over, life is near to go;
And with the slain of love love's ways are strewn,
And with their blood, if love will have it so;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, do thy will now; slay me if thou wilt;
There is no building now the walls are built,
No quarrying now the corner-stone is hewn,
No drinking now the vine's whole blood is spilt;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, slay me now; nay, for I will be slain;
Pluck thy red pleasure from the teeth of pain,
Break down thy vine ere yet grape-gatherers prune,
Slay me ere day can slay desire again;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Yea, with thy sweet lips, with thy sweet sword; yea,
Take life and all, for I will die, I say;
Love, I gave love, is life a better boon?
For sweet night's sake I will not live till day;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, I will sleep then only; nay, but go.
Ah sweet, too sweet to me, my sweet, I know
Love, sleep, and death go to the sweet same tune;
Hold my hair fast, and kiss me through it so.
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

A MATCH

IF love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or grey grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

1866.

FAUSTINE

Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morituri te salutant

LEAN back, and get some minutes' peace;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
Weighed over clean
With state of splendid hair that droops
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts
That crown you queen;
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brows well gathered up:
White gloss and sheen;
Carved lips that make my lips a cup
To drink, Faustine,

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
Being mixed therein
Since first the devil threw dice with God
For you, Faustine.

Your naked new-born soul, their stake,
Stood blind between;
God said "let him that wins her take
And keep Faustine."

But this time Satan throve, no doubt;
Long since, I ween,
God's part in you was battered out;
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,
Rang cracked and thin,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell
Far down, Faustine.

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,
Dead sorrow's kin;
So rang, thrown down, the devil's die
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,
One hard to wean;
But God, who lost you, left you fair,
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman
For her soul's screen—
The sort of beauty that's called human
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good
Or chaste of mien;
And that you would not if you could,
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?
Or did God mean
To scourge with scorpions for a rod
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,
As though I had seen
Red gold and black imperious hair
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus
Spared flesh and skin,
You come back face to face with us,
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;
Lithe limbs and lean
From drained-out pores dripped thick red sweat
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust
Blown off the scene;
Blood could not ease the bitter lust
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,
Where blood sank in;
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now: years entomb
The dust and din;
Yea, even the bath's fierce reek and fume
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now
Is life worth sin?
Where are the imperial years? and how
Are you Faustine?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot
Her times of teen;
Yea, this life likewise will you not
Forget, Faustine?

For in the time we know not of
Did fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all
Were smooth to spin;
They wove you like a Bacchanal,
The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you
Wild grapes to glean;
Your flower-like lips were dashed with dew
From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched to hold
The vine's wet green,
Long ere they coined in Roman gold
Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather
And winnowing fin,
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,
A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,
Whose fierce serene
Red pulseless planet never yearned
In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless love that makes
Hell's iron gin
Shut on you like a trap that breaks
The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,
What ghosts unclean
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root
Or epicene?
What flower of kisses without fruit
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?
What coiled obscene
Small serpents with soft stretching throats
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,
Maimed loves and mean,
This ghastly thin-faced time of ours,
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,
A love-machine
With clockwork joints of supple gold—
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,
The Lampsacene,
Who metes the gardens with his rod;
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love
(Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of,
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,
The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black;
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face
And hard bright chin
And shameful scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,
Still sweet and keen;
You'd give him—poison shall we say?
Or what, Faustine?

1862.

1866.

ROCOCO

TAKE hands and part with laughter;
Touch lips and part with tears;
Once more and no more after,
Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not remeasure
The ways that left us twain;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,
What will the mad gods do
For hate with me, I wonder,
Or what for love with you?
Forget them till November,
And dream there's April yet;
Forget that I remember,
And dream that I forget.

Time found our tired love sleeping,
And kissed away his breath;
But what should we do weeping,
Though light love sleep to death?
We have drained his lips at leisure,
Till there's not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure,
A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless
Might quicken if they would;
Say that the soul is deathless;
Dream that the gods are good;
Say March may wed September,
And time divorce regret;
But not that you remember,
And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places
What love scarce lives and hears:
We have seen on fervent faces
The pallor of strange tears:
We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover
And time bring back to time
The name of your first lover,
The ring of my first rhyme;
But rose-leaves of December
The frosts of June shall fret,
The day that you remember,
The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses
In heaven we twain have known;
The grief of cruel kisses,
The joy whose mouth makes moan;
The pulse's pause and measure,
Where in one furtive vein
Throbs through the heart of pleasure
The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons
And love for treason's sake;
Room for the swift new seasons,
The years that burn and break,
Dismantle and dismember
Men's days and dreams, Juliette;
For love may not remember,
But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,
Time withers him at root;

Bring all dead things and dying,
Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
Where, crushed by three days' pressure,
Our three days' love lies slain;
And earlier leaf of pleasure,
And latter flower of pain.

Breathe close upon the ashes,
It may be flame will leap;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
Lift up the lids, and weep.
Light love's extinguished ember,
Let one tear leave it wet
For one that you remember
And ten that you forget.

1866.

STAGE LOVE

WHEN the game began between them for a jest,
He played king and she played queen to match the best;
Laughter soft as tears, and tears that turned to laughter,
These were things she sought for years and sorrowed after.

Pleasure with dry lips, and pain that walks by night;
All the sting and all the stain of long delight;
These were things she knew not of, that knew not of her,
When she played at half a love with half a lover.

Time was chorus, gave them cues to laugh or cry;
They would kill, befool, amuse him, let him die;
Set him webs to weave to-day and break to-morrow,
Till he died for good in play, and rose in sorrow.

What the years mean; how time dies and is not slain;
How love grows and laughs and cries and wanes again;
These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man's pleasure.

1866.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS

THE burden of fair women. Vain delight,
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them grey,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
And grief that says what pleasure used to say;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee.
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night "Would God the day were here,"
And say at dawn "Would God the day were dead."
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle and sorrow upon thine head;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colours. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the grey above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy "It hath been,"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering,
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;

And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,
 And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;
 And where the red was, lo the bloodless white,
 And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,
 And where day was, the likeness of the night;
 This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
 Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
 For life is sweet, but after life is death.
 This is the end of every man's desire.

1866.

BEFORE THE MIRROR

(VERSES WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE)

Inscribed to James McNeill Whistler

I

WHITE rose in red rose-garden
 Is not so white;
 Snowdrops that plead for pardon
 And pine for fright
 Because the hard East blows
 Over their maiden rows
 Grow not as this face grows from pale to bright.

Behind the veil, forbidden,
 Shut up from sight,
 Love, is there sorrow hidden,
 Is there delight?
 Is joy thy dower or grief,
 White rose of weary leaf,
 Late rose whose life is brief, whose loves are light?

Soft snows that hard winds harden
Till each flake bite
Fill all the flowerless garden
Whose flowers took flight
Long since when summer ceased,
And men rose up from feast,
And warm west wind grew east, and warm day night.

II

"Come snow, come wind or thunder
High up in air,
I watch my face, and wonder
At my bright hair;
Nought else exalts or grieves
The rose at heart, that heaves
With love of her own leaves and lips that pair.

"She knows not loves that kissed her
She knows not where.
Art thou the ghost, my sister,
White sister there,
Am I the ghost, who knows?
My hand, a fallen rose,
Lies snow-white on white snows, and takes no care.

"I cannot see what pleasures
Or what pains were;
What pale new loves and treasures
New years will bear;
What beam will fall, what shower,
What grief or joy for dower;
But one thing knows the flower; the flower is fair."

III

Glad, but not flushed with gladness,
Since joys go by;
Sad, but not bent with sadness,
Since sorrows die;

Deep in the gleaming glass
She sees all past things pass,
And all sweet life that was lie down and lie.

There glowing ghosts of flowers
Draw down, draw nigh;
And wings of swift spent hours
Take flight and fly;
She sees by formless gleams,
She hears across cold streams,
Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,
With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
She knew not why,
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

1866.

EROTION

SWEET for a little even to fear, and sweet,
O love, to lay down fear at love's fair feet;
Shall not some fiery memory of his breath
Lie sweet on lips that touch the lips of death?
Yet leave me not; yet, if thou wilt, be free;
Love me no more, but love my love of thee.
Love where thou wilt, and live thy life; and I,
One thing I can, and one love cannot—die.
Pass from me; yet thine arms, thine eyes, thine hair,
Feed my desire and deaden my despair.
Yet once more ere time change us, ere my cheek
Whiten, ere hope be dumb or sorrow speak,
Yet once more ere thou hate me, one full kiss;
Keep other hours for others, save me this.

Yea, and I will not (if it please thee) weep,
Lest thou be sad; I will but sigh, and sleep.
Sweet, does death hurt? thou canst not do me wrong:
I shall not lack thee, as I loved thee, long.
Hast thou not given me above all that live
Joy, and a little sorrow shalt not give?
What even though fairer fingers of strange girls
Pass nestling through thy beautiful boy's curls
As mine did, or those curled lithe lips of thine
Meet theirs as these, all theirs come after mine;
And though I were not, though I be not, best,
I have loved and love thee more than all the rest.
O love, O lover, loose or hold me fast,
I had thee first, whoever have thee last;
Fairer or not, what need I know, what care?
To thy fair bud my blossom once seemed fair.
Why am I fair at all before thee, why
At all desired? seeing thou art fair, not I.
I shall be glad of thee, O fairest head,
Alive, alone, without thee, with thee, dead;
I shall remember while the light lives yet,
And in the night-time I shall not forget.
Though (as thou wilt) thou leave me ere life leave,
I will not, for thy love I will not, grieve;
Not as they use who love not more than I,
Who love not as I love thee though I die;
And though thy lips, once mine, be oftener prest
To many another brow and balmier breast,
And sweeter arms, or sweeter to thy mind,
Lull thee or lure, more fond thou wilt not find.

1866.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

BACK to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free;
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year:

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be prest
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
Look earthward now;
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least
And reverent heart
May move thee, royal and released,
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
Mix with thy name
As morning-star with evening-star
His faultless fame.

1866.

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER. 1852

PUSH hard across the sand,
For the salt wind gathers breath;
Shoulder and wrist and hand,
Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,
The foam-heads loosen and flee;
It swells and welters and swings,
The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff
The long corn flickers and shakes;
Push, for the wind holds stiff,
And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,
Out with her over the sand;
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,
Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!
The old red shall be floated again
When the rank that are thin shall be thinned,
When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered
And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep
And the emperor halts his kine,
While Shame is a watchman asleep
And Faith is a keeper of swine,

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,
Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,
From Cayenne to the Austrian whips;
Forth, with the rain in our hair
And the salt sweet foam in our lips;

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,
In the blown wet face of the sea;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

1862.

1866.

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION. 1860

THE heart of the rulers is sick, and the high-priest covers his
head:
For this is the song of the quick that is heard in the ears of the
dead.

The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and mighty and
fleet:
Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the sound of the noise
of their feet.

The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamour of days and
of deeds:
The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken like
reeds.

The high-priest sick from qualms, with his raiment bloodily
dashed;
The thief with branded palms, and the liar with cheeks
abashed.

They are smitten, they tremble greatly, they are pained for
their pleasant things:

For the house of the priests made stately, and the might in
the mouth of the kings.

They are grieved and greatly afraid; they are taken, they
shall not flee:

For the heart of the nations is made as the strength of the
springs of the sea.

They were fair in the grace of gold, they walked with delicate
feet:

They were clothed with the cunning of old, and the smell of
their garments was sweet.

For the breaking of gold in their hair they halt as a man made
lame:

They are utterly naked and bare; their mouths are bitter with
shame.

Wilt thou judge thy people now, O king that wast found most
wise?

Wilt thou lie any more, O thou whose mouth is emptied of lies?

Shall God make a pact with thee, till his hook be found in thy
sides?

Wilt thou put back the time of the sea, or the place of the
season of tides?

Set a word in thy lips, to stand before God with a word in thy
mouth:

That "the rain shall return in the land, and the tender dew
after drouth."

But the arm of the elders is broken, their strength is unbound
and undone:

They wait for a sign of a token; they cry, and there cometh
none.

Their moan is in every place, the cry of them filleth the land:
There is shame in the sight of their face, there is fear in the
thews of their hand.

They are girdled about the reins with a curse for the girdle
thereon:

For the noise of the rending of chains the face of their colour is
gone.

For the sound of the shouting of men they are grievously
stricken at heart:

They are smitten asunder with pain, their bones are smitten
apart.

There is none of them all that is whole; their lips gape open
for breath;

They are clothed with sickness of soul, and the shape of the
shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet; it is full of the shouting of
mirth;

As one shaketh the sides of a sheet, so it shaketh the ends of
the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen; the iron has opened its
mouth;

The corn is red that was green; it is bound for the sheaves of
the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound of the wind as a
breath,

In the ears of the souls that were dead, in the dust of the
deepness of death;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the ways of the stars
undone,

The light of the whole sky shaken, the light of the face of the
sun:

Where the waters are emptied and broken, the waves of the
waters are stayed;

Where God has bound for a token the darkness that maketh
afraid;

Where the sword was covered and hidden, and dust had
grown in its side,

A word came forth which was bidden, the crying of one that
cried:

The sides of the two-edged sword shall be bare, and its mouth
shall be red,

For the breath of the face of the Lord that is felt in the bones
of the dead.

1866.

TO VICTOR HUGO

IN the fair days when God
By man as godlike trod,
And each alike was Greek, alike was free,
God's lightning spared, they said,
Alone the happier head
Whose laurels screened it; fruitless grace for thee,
To whom the high gods gave of right
Their thunders and their laurels and their light.

Sunbeams and bays before
Our master's servants wore,
For these Apollo left in all men's lands;
But far from these ere now
And watched with jealous brow
Lay the blind lightnings shut between God's hands,
And only loosed on slaves and kings
The terror of the tempest of their wings.

Born in those younger years
That shone with storms of spears
And shook in the wind blown from a dead world's pyre,
When by her back-blown hair

Napoleon caught the fair
And fierce Republic with her feet of fire,
And stayed with iron words and hands
Her flight, and freedom in a thousand lands:

Thou sawest the tides of things
Close over heads of kings,
And thine hand felt the thunder, and to thee
Laurels and lightnings were
As sunbeams and soft air
Mixed each in other, or as mist with sea
Mixed, or as memory with desire,
Or the lute's pulses with the louder lyre.

For thee man's spirit stood
Disrobed of flesh and blood,
And bare the heart of the most secret hours;
And to thine hand more tame
Than birds in winter came
High hopes and unknown flying forms of powers,
And from thy table fed, and sang
Till with the tune men's ears took fire and rang.

Even all men's eyes and ears
With fiery sound and tears
Waxed hot, and cheeks caught flame and eyelids light,
At those high songs of thine
That stung the sense like wine,
Or fell more soft than dew or snow by night,
Or wailed as in some flooded cave
Sobs the strong broken spirit of a wave.

But we, our master, we
Whose hearts, uplift to thee,
Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song,
We ask not nor await
From the clenched hands of fate,
As thou, remission of the world's old wrong;
Respite we ask not, nor release;
Freedom a man may have, he shall not peace.

Though thy most fiery hope
Storm heaven, to set wide ope
The all-sought-for gate whence God or Chance debars
All feet of men, all eyes—
The old night resumes her skies,
Her hollow hiding-place of clouds and stars,
Where nought save these is sure in sight;
And, paven with death, our days are roofed with night.

One thing we can; to be
Awhile, as men may, free;
But not by hope or pleasure the most stern
Goddess, most awful-eyed,
Sits, but on either side
Sit sorrow and the wrath of hearts that burn,
Sad faith that cannot hope or fear,
And memory grey with many a flowerless year.

Not that in stranger's wise
I lift not loving eyes
To the fair foster-mother France, that gave
Beyond the pale fleet foam
Help to my sires and home,
Whose great sweet breast could shelter those and save
Whom from her nursing breasts and hands
Their land cast forth of old on gentler lands.

Not without thoughts that ache
For theirs and for thy sake,
I, born of exiles, hail thy banished head;
I whose young song took flight
Toward the great heat and light
On me a child from thy far splendour shed,
From thine high place of soul and song,
Which, fallen on eyes yet feeble, made them strong.

Ah, not with lessening love
For memories born hereof,

I look to that sweet mother-land, and see
The old fields and fair full streams,
And skies, but fled like dreams
The feet of freedom and the thought of thee;
And all between the skies and graves
The mirth of mockers and the shame of slaves.

She, killed with noisome air,
Even she! and still so fair,
Who said "Let there be freedom," and there was
Freedom; and as a lance
The fiery eyes of France
Touched the world's sleep and as a sleep made pass
Forth of men's heavier ears and eyes
Smitten with fire and thunder from new skies.

Are they men's friends indeed
Who watch them weep and bleed?
Because thou hast loved us, shall the gods love thee?
Thou, first of men and friend,
Seest thou, even thou, the end?
Thou knowest what hath been, knowest thou what shall be?
Evils may pass and hopes endure;
But fate is dim, and all the gods obscure.

O nursed in airs apart,
O poet highest of heart,
Hast thou seen time, who hast seen so many things?
Are not the years more wise,
More sad than keenest eyes,
The years with soundless feet and sounding wings?
Passing we hear them not, but past
The clamour of them thrills us, and their blast.

Thou art chief of us, and lord;
Thy song is as a sword
Keen-edged and scented in the blade from flowers;
Thou art lord and king; but we

Lift younger eyes, and see
Less of high hope, less light on wandering hours;
Hours that have borne men down so long,
Seen the right fail, and watched uplift the wrong.

But thine imperial soul,
As years and ruins roll
To the same end, and all things and all dreams
With the same wreck and roar
Drift on the dim same shore,
Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams
Tracks the fresh water-spring to be
And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

As once the high God bound
With many a rivet round
Man's saviour, and with iron nailed him through,
At the wild end of things,
Where even his own bird's wings
Flagged, whence the sea shone like a drop of dew,
From Caucasus beheld below
Past fathoms of unfathomable snow;

So the strong God, the chance
Central of circumstance,
Still shows him exile who will not be slave;
All thy great fame and thee
Girt by the dim strait sea
With multitudinous walls of wandering wave;
Shows us our greatest from his throne
Fate stricken, and rejected of his own.

Yea, he is strong, thou say'st,
A mystery many-faced,
The wild beasts know him and the wild birds flee;
The blind night sees him, death
Shrinks beaten at his breath,
And his right hand is heavy on the sea:
We know he hath made us, and is king;
We know not if he care for anything.

Thus much, no more, we know;
He bade what is be so,
Bade light be and bade night be, one by one;
Bade hope and fear, bade ill
And good redeem and kill,
Till all men be aweary of the sun
And his world burn in its own flame
And bear no witness longer of his name.

Yet though all this be thus,
Be those men praised of us
Who have loved and wrought and sorrowed and not sinned
For fame or fear or gold,
Nor waxed for winter cold,
Nor changed for changes of the worldly wind;
Praised above men of men be these,
Till this one world and work we know shall cease.

Yea, one thing more than this,
We know that one thing is,
The splendour of a spirit without blame,
That not the labouring years
Blind-born, nor any fears,
Nor men nor any gods can tire or tame;
But purer power with fiery breath
Fills, and exalts above the gulfs of death.

Praised above men be thou,
Whose laurel-laden brow,
Made for the morning, droops not in the night;
Praised and beloved, that none
Of all thy great things done
Flies higher than thy most equal spirit's flight;
Praised, that nor doubt nor hope could bend
Earth's loftiest head, found upright to the end.

BEFORE DAWN

SWEET life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her,
Then two things might live longer,
Two sweeter things than they;
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower;
Delight that lives an hour,
And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sideways now, turned colder
Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
And brief beyond regret:
To laugh and love together
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah, sweet, one sin worth sinning
With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
 Between your throat and chin;
To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
 And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath swift sighs that thicken,
 Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
 To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused near us unaffrighted,
 Who found and left him free;
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder,
 And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
 “Lie still, O love, lie still;”
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
 And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,

And from her cloudier tresses
Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
Or hear it unaware;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him;
For all who find him lose him,
But all have found him fair.

1866.

DOLORES

NOTRE-DAME DES SEPT DOULEURS

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel
Red mouth like a venomous flower;
When these are gone by with their glories,
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,
O mystic and sombre Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain?

Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin;
But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
And then they would haunt thee in heaven:
Fierce midnights and famishing morrows,
And the loves that complete and control
All the joys of the flesh, all the sorrows
That wear out the soul.

O garment not golden but gilded,
O garden where all men may dwell,
O tower not of ivory, but builded
By hands that reach heaven from hell;
O mystical rose of the mire,
O house not of gold but of gain,
O house of unquenchable fire,
Our Lady of Pain!

O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast,
Bite hard, lest remembrance come after
And press with new lips where you pressed.
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn;
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure,
Ere pain come in turn.

In yesterday's reach and to-morrow's,
Out of sight though they lie of to-day,
There have been and there yet shall be sorrows
That smite not and bite not in play.
The life and the love thou despisest,
These hurt us indeed, and in vain,
O wise among women, and wisest,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who gave thee thy wisdom? what stories
That stung thee, what visions that smote?
Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,
When desire took thee first by the throat?
What bud was the shell of a blossom
That all men may smell to and pluck?
What milk fed thee first at what bosom?
What sins gave thee suck?

We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,
Thou art noble and nude and antique;
Libitina thy mother, Priapus
Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.

We play with light loves in the portal,
And wince and relent and refrain;
Loves die, and we know thee immortal,
Our Lady of Pain.

Fruits fail and love dies and time ranges;
Thou art fed with perpetual breath,
And alive after infinite changes,
And fresh from the kisses of death;
Of languors rekindled and rallied,
Of barren delights and unclean,
Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid
And poisonous queen.

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you?
Men touch them, and change in a trice
The lilies and languors of virtue
For the raptures and roses of vice;
Those lie where thy foot on the floor is,
These crown and caress thee and chain,
O splendid and sterile Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

There are sins it may be to discover,
There are deeds it may be to delight.
What new work wilt thou find for thy lover,
What new passions for daytime or night?
What spells that they know not a word of
Whose lives are as leaves overblown?
What tortures undreamt of, unheard of,
Unwritten, unknown?

Ah beautiful passionate body
That never has ached with a heart!
On thy mouth though the kisses are bloody,
Though they sting till it shudder and smart,
More kind than the love we adore is,
They hurt not the heart or the brain,
O bitter and tender Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

As our kisses relax and redouble,
From the lips and the foam and the fangs
Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble,
No dream of impossible pangs?
With the sweet of the sins of old ages
Wilt thou satiate thy soul as of yore?
Too sweet is the rind, say the sages,
Too bitter the core.

Hast thou told all thy secrets the last time,
And bared all thy beauties to one?
Ah, where shall we go then for pastime,
If the worst that can be has been done?
But sweet as the rind was the core is;
We are fain of thee still, we are fain,
O sanguine and subtle Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

By the hunger of change and emotion,
By the thirst of unbearable things,
By despair, the twin-born of devotion,
By the pleasure that winces and stings,
The delight that consumes the desire,
The desire that outruns the delight,
By the cruelty deaf as a fire
And blind as the night,

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwined and bitten
Till the foam has a savour of blood,
By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

Wilt thou smile as a woman disdain
The light fire in the veins of a boy?
But he comes to thee sad, without feigning,
Who has wearied of sorrow and joy;

Less careful of labour and glory
Than the elders whose hair has uncurled;
And young, but with fancies as hoary
And grey as the world.

I have passed from the outermost portal
To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;
What care though the service be mortal?
O our Lady of Torture, what care?
All thine the last wine that I pour is,
The last in the chalice we drain,
O fierce and luxurious Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

All thine the new wine of desire,
The fruit of four lips as they clung
Till the hair and the eyelids took fire,
The foam of a serpentine tongue,
The froth of the serpents of pleasure,
More salt than the foam of the sea,
Now felt as a flame, now at leisure
As wine shed for me.

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,
Marked cross from the womb and perverse!
They have found out the secret to cozen
The gods that constrain us and curse;
They alone, they are wise, and none other;
Give me place, even me, in their train,
O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,
Our Lady of Pain.

For the crown of our life as it closes
Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;
No thorns go as deep as a rose's,
And love is more cruel than lust.
Time turns the old days to derision,
Our loves into corpses or wives;
And marriage and death and division
Make barren our lives.

And pale from the past we draw nigh thee,
And satiate with comfortless hours;
And we know thee, how all men belie thee,
And we gather the fruit of thy flowers;
The passion that slays and recovers,
The pangs and the kisses that rain
On the lips and the limbs of thy lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

The desire of thy furious embraces
Is more than the wisdom of years,
On the blossom though blood lie in traces,
Though the foliage be sodden with tears.
For the lords in whose keeping the door is
That opens on all who draw breath
Gave the cypress to love, my Dolores,
The myrtle to death.

And they laughed, changing hands in the measure,
And they mixed and made peace after strife;
Pain melted in tears, and was pleasure;
Death tingled with blood, and was life.
Like lovers they melted and tingled,
In the dusk of thine innermost fane;
In the darkness they murmured and mingled,
Our Lady of Pain.

In a twilight where virtues are vices,
In thy chapels, unknown of the sun,
To a tune that enthralls and entices,
They were wed, and the twain were as one.
For the tune from thine altar hath sounded
Since God bade the world's work begin,
And the fume of thine incense abounded,
To sweeten the sin.

Love listens, and paler than ashes,
Through his curls as the crown on them slips,
Lifts languid wet eyelids and lashes,
And laughs with insatiable lips.

Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,
With music that scares the profane;
Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,
Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,
Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive;
In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,
In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.
In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,
In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache;
Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him
Asleep and awake.

Thou shalt touch and make redder his roses
With juice not of fruit nor of bud;
When the sense in the spirit reposes,
Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.
Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,
Who would live and not languish or feign,
O sleepless and deadly Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

Dost thou dream, in a respite of slumber,
In a lull of the fires of thy life,
Of the days without name, without number,
When thy will stung the world into strife;
When, a goddess, the pulse of thy passion
Smote kings as they revelled in Rome;
And they hailed thee re-risen, O Thalassian,
Foam-white, from the foam?

When thy lips had such lovers to flatter;
When the city lay red from thy rods,
And thine hands were as arrows to scatter
The children of change and their gods;
When the blood of thy foemen made fervent
A sand never moist from the main,
As one smote them, their lord and thy servant,
Our Lady of Pain.

On sands by the storm never shaken,
Nor wet from the washing of tides;
Nor by foam of the waves overtaken,
Nor winds that the thunder bestrides;
But red from the print of thy paces,
Made smooth for the world and its lords,
Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,
And splendid with swords.

There the gladiator, pale for thy pleasure,
Drew bitter and perilous breath;
There torments laid hold on the treasure
Of limbs too delicious for death;
When thy gardens were lit with live torches;
When the world was a steed for thy rein;
When the nations lay prone in thy porches,
Our Lady of Pain.

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
Stood flushed, as a harp-player stands,
The implacable beautiful tyrant,
Rose-crowned, having death in his hands;
And a sound as the sound of loud water
Smote far through the flight of the fires,
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
A thunder of lyres.

Dost thou dream of what was and no more is,
The old kingdoms of earth and the kings?
Dost thou hunger for these things, Dolores,
For these, in a world of new things?
But thy bosom no fasts could emaciate,
No hunger compel to complain
Those lips that no bloodshed could satiate,
Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,
The white wealth of thy body made whiter
By the blushes of amorous blows,

And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
And branded by kisses that bruise;
When all shall be gone that now lingers,
Ah, what shall we lose?

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret.
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain.

All shrines that were Vestal are flameless,
But the flame has not fallen from this;
Though obscure be the god, and though nameless
The eyes and the hair that we kiss;
Low fires that love sits by and forges
Fresh heads for his arrows and thine;
Hair loosened and soiled ~~in~~amid orgies
With kisses and wine.

Thy skin changes country and colour,
And shrivels or swells to a snake's.
Let it brighten and bloat and grow duller,
We know it, the flames and the flakes,
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round skies where a star is a stain,
And the leaves with thy litanies written,
Our Lady of Pain.

On thy bosom though many a kiss be,
There are none such as knew it of old.
Was it Alciphron once or Arisbe,
Male ringlets or feminine gold,
That thy lips met with under the statue,
Whence a look shot out sharp after thieves
From the eyes of the garden god at you
Across the fig-leaves?

Then still, through dry seasons and moister,
 One god had a wreath to his shrine;
 Then love was the pearl of his oyster,¹
 And Venus rose red out of wine.
 We have all done amiss, choosing rather
 Such loves as the wise gods disdain;
 Intercede for us thou with thy father,
 Our Lady of Pain.

In spring he had crowns of his garden,
 Red corn in the heat of the year,
 Then hoary green olives that harden
 When the grape-blossom freezes with fear;
 And milk-budded myrtles with Venus
 And vine-leaves with Bacchus he trod;
 And ye said, "We have seen, he hath seen us,
 A visible God."

What broke off the garlands that girt you?
 What sundered you spirit and clay?
 Weak sins yet alive are as virtue
 To the strength of the sins of that day.
 For dried is the blood of thy lover,
 Ipsithilla, contracted the vein;
 Cry aloud, "Will he rise and recover,
 Our Lady of Pain?"

Cry aloud; for the old world is broken:
 Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,
 And rears not the bountiful token
 And spreads not the fatherly feast.
 From the midmost of Ida, from shady
 Recesses that murmur at morn,
 They have brought and baptized her, Our Lady,
 A goddess new-born.

¹ Nam te præcipuè in suis urbibus colit ora
 Hellespontia, cæteris ostreosior oris.

And the chaplets of old are above us,
And the oyster-bed teems out of reach;
Old poets outsing and outlove us,
And Catullus makes mouths at our speech.
Who shall kiss, in thy father's own city,
With such lips as he sang with, again?
Intercede for us all of thy pity,
Our Lady of Pain.

Out of Dindymus heavily laden
Her lions draw bound and unfed
A mother, a mortal, a maiden,
A queen over death and the dead.
She is cold, and her habit is lowly,
Her temple of branches and sods;
Most fruitful and virginal, holy,
A mother of gods.

She hath wasted with fire thine high places,
She hath hidden and marred and made sad
The fair limbs of the Loves, the fair faces
Of gods that were goodly and glad.
She slays, and her hands are not bloody;
She moves as a moon in the wane,
White-robed, and thy raiment is ruddy,
Our Lady of Pain.

They shall pass and their places be taken,
The gods and the priests that are pure.
They shall pass, and shalt thou not be shaken?
They shall perish, and shalt thou endure?
Death laughs, breathing close and relentless
In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,
With a pinch in his fingers of scentless
And delicate dust.

But the worm shall revive thee with kisses;
Thou shalt change and transmute as a god,
As the rod to a serpent that hisses,
As the serpent again to a rod.

Thy life shall not cease though thou doff it;
Thou shalt live until evil be slain,
And good shall die first, said thy prophet,
Our Lady of Pain.

Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it,
Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,
Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet,
Sin's child by incestuous Death?
Did he find out in fire at his waking,
Or discern as his eyelids lost light,
When the bands of the body were breaking
And all came in sight?

Who has known all the evil before us,
Or the tyrannous secrets of time?
Though we match not the dead men that bore us
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime—
Though the heathen outface and outlive us,
And our lives and our longings are twain—
Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who are we that embalm and embrace thee
With spices and savours of song?
What is time, that his children should face thee?
What am I, that my lips do thee wrong?
I could hurt thee—but pain would delight thee;
Or caress thee—but love would repel;
And the lovers whose lips would excite thee
Are serpents in hell.

Who now shall content thee as they did,
Thy lovers, when temples were built
And the hair of the sacrifice braided
And the blood of the sacrifice spilt,
In Lampsacus fervent with faces,
In Aphaca red from thy reign,
Who embraced thee with awful embraces,
Our Lady of Pain?

Where are they, Cotytto or Venus,
Astarte or Ashtaroth, where?
Do their hands as we touch come between us?
Is the breath of them hot in thy hair?
From their lips have thy lips taken fever,
With the blood of their bodies grown red?
Hast thou left upon earth a believer
If these men are dead?

They were purple of raiment and golden,
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
Thy lovers, in haunts unbeholden,
In marvellous chambers of thine.
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,
Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,
O daughter of Death and Priapus,
Our Lady of Pain.

What ails us to fear overmeasure,
To praise thee with timorous breath,
O mistress and mother of pleasure,
The one thing as certain as death?
We shall change as the things that we cherish,
Shall fade as they faded before,
As foam upon water shall perish,
As sand upon shore.

We shall know what the darkness discovers,
If the grave-pit be shallow or deep;
And our fathers of old, and our lovers,
We shall know if they sleep not or sleep.
We shall see whether hell be not heaven,
Find out whether tares be not grain,
And the joys of thee seventy times seven,
Our Lady of Pain.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

HERE, where the world is quiet;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labour,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;

Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

1866.

HESPERIA

Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without
shore is,
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of joy,
As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region
of stories,

Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories beloved
from a boy,
Blows from the capes of the past oversea to the bays of the
present,
Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible
feet,
Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough
ways or pleasant,
Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it hither to me, O
my sweet?
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with
the water,
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the
west,
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a
daughter
Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water at
rest.
Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides after
slumber,
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when the moon
overhead
Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and stars
without number
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that are burnt
by the dead,
Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch of for-
gotten caresses,
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life that
endures;
The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet, and the
wind of thy tresses,
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid that
allures.
But thy bosom is warm for my face and profound as a mani-
fold flower,
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odour that fades in a
flame;

Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of thy mouth, and the
bountiful hour

That makes me forget what was sin, and would make me
forget were it shame.

Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender, thy
lips that are loving,

Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon like a
dream;

And my heart yearns baffled and blind, moved vainly toward
thee, and moving

As the reflux seaweed moves in the languid exuberant
stream,

Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under water in prison,

That stretches and swings to the slow passionate pulse of
the sea,

Closed up from the air and the sun, but alive, as a ghost re-
arisen,

Pale as the love that revives as a ghost rearisen in me.

From the bountiful infinite west, from the happy memorial
places

Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of the
dead,

Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of ineffable
faces,

And the sound of a sea without wind is about them, and
sunset is red,

Come back to redeem and release me from love that recalls
and represses,

That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent has
eaten his fill;

From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the
furtive caresses

That murder the youth in a man or ever his heart have its
will.

Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes cannot weep; thou art
pale as a rose is,

Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover the blush of the
bud;

And the heart of the flower is compassion, and pity the core it encloses,

Pity, not love, that is born of the breath and decays with the blood.

As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the edge of it bruises her bosom,

So love wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame;

I have loved overmuch in my life; when the live bud bursts with the blossom,

Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and the wine thereof shame.

As a heart that its anguish divides is the green bud cloven asunder;

As the blood of a man self-slain is the flush of the leaves that allure;

And the perfume as poison and wine to the brain, a delight and a wonder;

And the thorns are too sharp for a boy, too slight for a man, to endure.

Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose; and I cared not for glory's:

Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleasure were mixed in my hair.

Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was woven with, O my Dolores?

Was it pallor of slumber, or blush as of blood, that I found in thee fair?

For desire is a respite from love, and the flesh not the heart is her fuel;

She was sweet to me once, who am fled and escaped from the rage of her reign;

Who behold as of old time at hand as I turn, with her mouth growing cruel,

And flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

Low down where the thicket is thicker with thorns than with leaves in the summer,

In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a hissing of tongues
that I knew;
And the lithe long throats of her snakes reach round her, their
mouths overcome her,
And her lips grow cool with their foam, made moist as a
desert with dew.
With the thirst and the hunger of lust though her beautiful
lips be so bitter,
With the cold foul foam of the snakes they soften and
redden and smile;
And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes wax wide and her
eyelashes glitter,
And she laughs with a savour of blood in her face, and a
savour of guile.
She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her hair blows hither
and hisses,
As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown till it shudder and
leap;
Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul, nor her poisonous
kisses,
To consume it alive and divide from thy bosom, Our Lady
of Sleep.
Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now it return into
prison,
Who shall redeem it anew? but we, if thou wilt, let us
fly;
Let us take to us, now that the white skies thrill with a moon
unarisen,
Swift horses of fear or of love, take flight and depart and
not die.
They are swifter than dreams, they are stronger than death;
there is none that hath ridden,
None that shall ride in the dim strange ways of his life as
we ride;
By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the
shore that is hidden,
Where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible
tide;

By the sands where sorrow has trodden, the salt pools bitter
and sterile,
By the thundering reef and the low sea-wall and the channel
of years,
Our wild steeds press on the night, strain hard through
pleasure and peril,
Labour and listen and pant not or pause for the peril that
nears;
And the sound of them trampling the way cleaves night as an
arrow asunder,
And slow by the sand-hill and swift by the down with its
glimpses of grass,
Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and
thunder,
Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass;
Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland air that was mute as
a maiden,
Stung into storm by the speed of our passage, and deaf
where we past;
And our spirits too burn as we bound, thine holy but mine
heavy-laden,
As we burn with the fire of our flight; ah, love, shall we win at
the last?

1866.

LOVE AT SEA

WE are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's hand to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were;

Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where.
We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
Or flowers of foam?
We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land.

Imitated from Théophile Gautier.
1866.

THE SUNDEW

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red.
Tread close, and either way you tread
Some faint black water jets between
Lest you should bruise the curious head.

A live thing maybe; who shall know?
The summer knows and suffers it;
For the cool moss is thick and sweet
Each side, and saves the blossom so
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns
About it; breathless though it be,
Bow down and worship; more than we
Is the least flower whose life returns,
Least weed renascent in the sea.

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight
With wants, with many memories;
These see their mother what she is,
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright
The apple-coloured cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass,
Blown all one way to shelter it
From trample of strayed kine, with feet
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat.

You call it sundew: how it grows,
If with its colour it have breath,
If life taste sweet to it, if death
Pain its soft petal, no man knows:
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,
In these green miles the spring begun
Thy growth ere April had half done
With the soft secret of her ways
Or June made ready for the sun.

O red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower,
I have a secret halved with thee.

The name that is love's name to me
 Thou knowest, and the face of her
 Who is my festival to see.

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,
 Coloured the heavy moss-water:
 Thou wert not worth green midsummer
 Nor fit to live to August blue,
 O sundew, not remembering her.

1862.

1866.

FÉLISE

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

WHAT shall be said between us here
 Among the downs, between the trees,
 In fields that knew our feet last year,
 In sight of quiet sands and seas,
 This year, Félice?

Who knows what word were best to say?
 For last year's leaves lie dead and red
 On this sweet day, in this green May,
 And barren corn makes bitter bread.
 What shall be said?

Here as last year the fields begin,
 A fire of flowers and glowing grass;
 The old fields we laughed and lingered in,
 Seeing each our souls in last year's glass,
 Félice, alas!

Shall we not laugh, shall we not weep,
 Not we, though this be as it is?
 For love awake or love asleep
 Ends in a laugh, a dream, a kiss,
 A song like this.

I that have slept awake, and you
Sleep, who last year were well awake.
Though love do all that love can do,
My heart will never ache or break
For your heart's sake.

The great sea, faultless as a flower,
Throbs, trembling under beam and breeze,
And laughs with love of the amorous hour.
I found you fairer once, *Félise*,
Than flowers or seas.

We played at bondsman and at queen;
But as the days change men change too;
I find the grey sea's notes of green,
The green sea's fervent flakes of blue,
More fair than you.

Your beauty is not over fair
Now in mine eyes, who am grown up wise.
The smell of flowers in all your hair
Allures not now; no sigh replies
If your heart sighs.

But you sigh seldom, you sleep sound,
You find love's new name good enough.
Less sweet I find it than I found
The sweetest name that ever love
Grew weary of.

My snake with bright bland eyes, my snake
Grown tame and glad to be caressed,
With lips athirst for mine to slake
Their tender fever! who had guessed
You loved me best?

I had died for this last year, to know
You loved me. Who shall turn on fate?
I care not if love come or go
Now, though your love seek mine for mate.
It is too late.

The dust of many strange desires
Lies deep between us; in our eyes
Dead smoke of perishable fires
Flickers, a fume in air and skies,
A steam of sighs.

You loved me and you loved me not;
A little, much, and overmuch.
Will you forget as I forgot?
Let all dead things lie dead; none such
Are soft to touch.

I love you and I do not love,
Too much, a little, not at all;
Too much, and never yet enough.
Birds quick to fledge and fly at call
Are quick to fall.

And these love longer now than men,
And larger loves than ours are these.
No diver brings up love again
Dropped once, my beautiful *Félise*,
In such cold seas.

Gone deeper than all plummets sound,
Where in the dim green dayless day
The life of such dead things lies bound
As the sea feeds on, wreck and stray
And castaway.

Can I forget? yea, that can I,
And that can all men; so will you,
Alive, or later, when you die,
Ah, but the love you plead was true?
Was mine not too?

I loved you for that name of yours
Long ere we met, and long enough.
Now that one thing of all endures—
The sweetest name that ever love
Waxed weary of.

Like colours in the sea, like flowers,
Like a cat's splendid circled eyes
That wax and wane with love for hours,
Green as green flame, blue-grey like skies,
And soft like sighs—

And all these only like your name,
And your name full of all of these.
I say it, and it sounds the same—
Save that I say it now at ease,
Your name, *Félice*.

I said "she must be swift and white,
And subtly warm, and half perverse,
And sweet like sharp soft fruit to bite,
And like a snake's love lithe and fierce."
Men have guessed worse.

What was the song I made of you
Here where the grass forgets our feet
As afternoon forgets the dew?
Ah that such sweet things should be fleet,
Such fleet things sweet!

As afternoon forgets the dew,
As time in time forgets all men,
As our old place forgets us two,
Who might have turned to one thing then,
But not again.

O lips that mine have grown into
Like April's kissing May,
O fervent eyelids letting through
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,
The bluest of things grey,

If you were I and I were you,
How could I love you, say?
How could the roseleaf love the rue,
The day love nightfall and her dew,
Though night may love the day?

You loved it may be more than I;
We know not; love is hard to seize,
And all things are not good to try;
And lifelong loves the worst of these
For us, Félice.

Ah, take the season and have done,
Love well the hour and let it go:
Two souls may sleep and wake up one,
Or dream they wake and find it so,
And then—you know.

Kiss me once hard as though a flame
Lay on my lips and made them fire;
The same lips now, and not the same;
What breath shall fill and re-inspire
A dead desire?

The old song sounds hollower in mine ear
Than thin keen sounds of dead men's speech—
A noise one hears and would not hear;
Too strong to die, too weak to reach
From wave to beach.

We stand on either side the sea,
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean
I toward you, you toward me;
But what hears either save the keen
Grey sea between?

A year divides us, love from love,
Though you love now, though I loved then.
The gulf is strait, but deep enough;
Who shall recross, who among men
Shall cross again?

Love was a jest last year, you said,
And what lives surely, surely dies.
Even so; but now that love is dead,
Shall love rekindle from wet eyes,
From subtle sighs?

For many loves are good to see;
Mutable loves, and loves perverse;
But there is nothing, nor shall be,
So sweet, so wicked, but my verse
Can dream of worse.

For we that sing and you that love
Know that which man may, only we.
The rest live under us; above,
Live the great gods in heaven, and see
What things shall be.

So this thing is and must be so;
For man dies, and love also dies.
Though yet love's ghost moves to and fro
The sea-green mirrors of your eyes,
And laughs, and lies.

Eyes coloured like a water-flower,
And deeper than the green sea's glass;
Eyes that remember one sweet hour —
In vain we swore it should not pass;
In vain, alas!

Ah my *Félise*, if love or sin,
If shame or fear could hold it fast,
Should we not hold it? Love wears thin,
And they laugh well who laugh the last.
Is it not past?

The gods, the gods are stronger; time
Falls down before them, all men's knees
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb
Like incense towards them; yea, for these
Are gods, *Félise*.

Immortal are they, clothed with powers,
Not to be comforted at all;
Lords over all the fruitless hours;
Too great to appease, too high to appal,
Too far to call.

For none shall move the most high gods,
Who are most sad, being cruel; none
Shall break or take away the rods
Wherewith they scourge us, not as one
That smites a son.

By many a name of many a creed
We have called upon them, since the sands
Fell through time's hour-glass first, a seed
Of life; and out of many lands
Have we stretched hands.

When have they heard us? who hath known
Their faces, climbed unto their feet,
Felt them and found them? Laugh or groan,
Doth heaven remurmur and repeat
Sad sounds or sweet?

Do the stars answer? in the night
Have ye found comfort? or by day
Have ye seen gods? What hope, what light,
Falls from the farthest starriest way
On you that pray?

Are the skies wet because we weep,
Or fair because of any mirth?
Cry out; they are gods; perchance they sleep;
Cry; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,
Thou dust and earth.

O earth, thou art fair; O dust, thou art great;
O laughing lips and lips that mourn,
Pray, till ye feel the exceeding weight
Of God's intolerable scorn,
Not to be borne.

Behold, there is no grief like this;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate?

Ye fools and blind; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky?

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.
Ye fools; for which among you deems
His prayer can alter green to red
Or stones to bread?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears
Till all these things be drawn in one,
The sound of iron-footed years,
And all the oppression that is done
Under the sun?

Ye might end surely, surely pass
Out of the multitude of things,
Under the dust, beneath the grass,
Deep in dim death, where no thought stings,
No record clings.

No memory more of love or hate,
No trouble, nothing that aspires,
No sleepless labour thwarting fate,
And thwarted; where no travail tires,
Where no faith fires.

All passes, nought that has been is,
Things good and evil have one end.
Can anything be otherwise
Though all men swear all things would mend
With God to friend?

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
Can ye hold fast for shine or shower
One wingless hour?

Ah sweet, and we too, can we bring
One sigh back, bid one smile revive?
Can God restore one ruined thing,
Or he who slays our souls alive
Make dead things thrive?

Two gifts perforce he has given us yet,
Though sad things stay and glad things fly;
Two gifts he has given us, to forget
All glad and sad things that go by,
And then to die.

We know not whether death be good,
But life at least it will not be:
Men will stand saddening as we stood,
Watch the same fields and skies as we
And the same sea.

Let this be said between us here,
One love grows green when one turns grey;
This year knows nothing of last year;
To-morrow has no more to say
To yesterday.

Live and let live, as I will do,
Love and let love, and so will I.
But, sweet, for me no more with you:
Not while I live, not though I die.
Goodnight, goodbye.

1866.

AN INTERLUDE

In the greenest growth of the Maytime,
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the daytime;
The spring was glad that we met.

There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet;
The breath at your lips that panted,
The pulse of the grass at your feet.

You came, and the sun came after,
And the green grew golden above;
And the flag-flowers lightened with laughter,
And the meadow-sweet shook with love.

Your feet in the full-grown grasses
Moved soft as a weak wind blows;
You passed me as April passes,
With face made out of a rose.

By the stream where the stems were slender,
Your bright foot paused at the sedge;
It might be to watch the tender
Light leaves in the springtime hedge,

On boughs that the sweet month blanches
With flowery frost of May:
It might be a bird in the branches,
It might be a thorn in the way.

I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam straight like a finger
Struck sharp through the leaves at you.

And a bird overhead sang *Follow*,
And a bird to the right sang *Here*;
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.

I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said;
By the dawn and the dewfall anointed,
You were queen by the gold on your head.

As the glimpse of a burnt-out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,
I remember, forget, and remember
What Love saw done and undone.

I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met;
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.

And May with her world in flower
Seemed still to murmur and smile
As you murmured and smiled for an hour;
I saw you turn at the stile.

A hand like a white wood-blossom
You lifted, and waved, and passed,
With head hung down to the bosom,
And pale, as it seemed, at last.

And the best and the worst of this is
That neither is most to blame
If you've forgotten my kisses
And I've forgotten your name.

SAPPHICS

ALL the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
 Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
 Full of the vision

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
 Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
 Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
 Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamour of singing women
 Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
 Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
 Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song.
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears for laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

1866.

MADONNA MIA

UNDER green apple-boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My lady hath her house
Between two bowers;
In either of the twain
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand;
In all the great green land
None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
 Wrought with strange gold,
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;
And one strait gown of red
 Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
 To laugh, to gaze;
Her breasts are like white birds,
And all her gracious words
As water-grass to herds
 In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical;
Her flowers are fed from all,
 Her joys from these;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
 Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
 And is not sad;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes;
None knows her, weak or wise,
 Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands;

Though you should search all lands
Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,
Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said;
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
In sunset lands;
This was my lady's birth;
God gave her might and mirth
And laid his whole sweet earth
Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
Being strong as love.

DEDICATION

1865

THE sea gives her shells to the shingle,
The earth gives her streams to the sea;
They are many, but my gift is single,
My verses, the firstfruits of me.
Let the wind take the green and the grey leaf,
Cast forth without fruit upon air;
Take rose-leaf and vine-leaf and bay-leaf
Blown loose from the hair.

The night shakes them round me in legions,
Dawn drives them before her like dreams;
Time sheds them like snows on strange regions,
Swept shoreward on infinite streams;
Leaves pallid and sombre and ruddy,
Dead fruits of the fugitive years;
Some stained as with wine and made bloody,
And some as with tears.

Some scattered in seven years' traces,
As they fell from the boy that was then;
Long left among idle green places,
Or gathered but now among men;
On seas full of wonder and peril,
Blown white round the capes of the north;
Or in islands where myrtles are sterile
And loves bring not forth.

O daughters of dreams and of stories
That life is not wearied of yet,
Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,
Félice and Yolande and Juliette,
Shall I find you not still, shall I miss you,
When sleep, that is true or that seems,
Comes back to me hopeless to kiss you,
O daughters of dreams?

They are past as a slumber that passes,
As the dew of a dawn of old time;
More frail than the shadows on glasses,
More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.
As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,
When their hollows are full of the night,
So the birds that flew singing to me-ward
Recede out of sight.

The songs of dead seasons, that wander
On wings of articulate words;
Lost leaves that the shore-wind may squander,
Light flocks of untameable birds;
Some sang to me dreaming in class time
And truant in hand as in tongue;
For the youngest were born of boy's pastime,
The eldest are young.

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,
Is there hearing for songs that recede,
Tunes touched from a harp with man's fingers
Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?
Is there place in the land of your labour,
Is there room in your world of delight,
Where change has not sorrow for neighbour
And day has not night?

In their wings though the sea-wind yet quiver,
Will you spare not a space for them there
Made green with the running of rivers
And gracious with temperate air;
In the fields and the turreted cities,
That cover from sunshine and rain
Fair passions and bountiful pities
And loves without stain?

In a land of clear colours and stories,
In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories
And a murmur of musical flowers;

In woods where the spring half uncovers
The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
For these is there place?

For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle
Their music as clouds do their fire:
For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle
Wild wings in a wind of desire;
In the stream of the storm as it settles
Blown seaward, borne far from the sun,
Shaken loose on the darkness like petals
Dropt one after one?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious
And lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,
For the love of old loves and lost times;
And receive in your palace of painting
This revel of rhymes.

Though the seasons of man full of losses
Make empty the years full of youth,
If but one thing be constant in crosses,
Change lays not her hand upon truth;
Hopes die, and their tombs are for token
That the grief as the joy of them ends
Ere time that breaks all men has broken
The faith between friends.

Though the many lights dwindle to one light,
There is help if the heaven has one;
Though the skies be discrowned of the sunlight
And the earth dispossessed of the sun,
They have moonlight and sleep for repayment,
When, refreshed as a bride and set free,
With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,
Night sinks on the sea.

PRELUDE

BETWEEN the green bud and the red
Youth sat and sang by Time, and shed
 From eyes and tresses flowers and tears,
 From heart and spirit hopes and fears,
Upon the hollow stream whose bed
 Is channelled by the foamless years;
And with the white the gold-haired head
 Mixed running locks, and in Time's ears
Youth's dreams hung singing, and Time's truth
Was half not harsh in the ears of Youth.

Between the bud and the blown flower
Youth talked with joy and grief an hour,
 With footless joy and wingless grief
 And twin-born faith and disbelief
Who share the seasons to devour;
 And long ere these made up their sheaf
Felt the winds round him shake and shower
 The rose-red and the blood-red leaf,
Delight whose germ grew never grain,
And passion dyed in its own pain.

Then he stood up, and trod to dust
Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,
 And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,
 And bound for sandals on his feet
Knowledge and patience of what must
 And what things may be, in the heat
And cold of years that rot and rust
 And alter; and his spirit's meat
Was freedom, and his staff was wrought
Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought.

For what has he whose will sees clear
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
 Swift hopes and slow despondencies?
His heart is equal with the sea's

And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
Is level to the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
With the actual earth's equalities,
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.

His soul is even with the sun
Whose spirit and whose eye are one,
Who seeks not stars by day, nor light
And heavy heat of day by night.
Him can no God cast down, whom none
Can lift in hope beyond the height
Of fate and nature and things done
By the calm rule of might and right
That bids men be and bear and do,
And die beneath blind skies or blue.

To him the lights of even and morn
Speak no vain things of love or scorn,
Fancies and passions miscreate
By man in things dispassionate.
Nor holds he fellowship forlorn
With souls that pray and hope and hate,
And doubt they had better not been born,
And fain would lure or scare off fate
And charm their doomsman from their doom
And make fear dig its own false tomb.

He builds not half of doubts and half
Of dreams his own soul's cenotaph,
Whence hopes and fears with helpless eyes,
Wrapt loose in cast-off cerecloths, rise
And dance and wring their hands and laugh,
And weep thin tears and sigh light sighs,
And without living lips would quaff
The living spring in man that lies,
And drain his soul of faith and strength
It might have lived on a life's length.

He hath given himself and hath not sold
To God for heaven or man for gold,
Or grief for comfort that it gives,
Or joy for grief's restoratives.
He hath given himself to time, whose fold
Shuts in the mortal flock that lives
On its plain pasture's heat and cold
And the equal year's alternatives.
Earth, heaven, and time, death, life, and he,
Endure while they shall be to be.

"Yet between death and life are hours
To flush with love and hide in flowers;
What profit save in these?" men cry:
"Ah, see, between soft earth and sky,
What only good things here are ours!"
They say, "what better wouldst thou try,
What sweeter sing of? or what powers
Serve, that will give thee ere thou die
More joy to sing and be less sad,
More heart to play and grow more glad?"

Play then and sing; we too have played,
We likewise, in that subtle shade.
We too have twisted through our hair
Such tendrils as the wild Loves wear,
And heard what mirth the Mænads made,
Till the wind blew our garlands bare
And left their roses disarrayed,
And smote the summer with strange air,
And disengirdled and discrowned
The limbs and locks that vine-wreaths bound.

We too have tracked by star-proof trees
The tempest of the Thyiades
Scare the loud night on hills that hid
The blood-feasts of the Bassarid,
Heard their song's iron cadences
Fright the wolf hungering from the kid,

Outroar the lion-throated seas,
Outchide the north-wind if it chid,
And hush the torrent-tongued ravines
With thunders of their tambourines.

But the fierce flute whose notes acclaim
Dim goddesses of fiery fame,

Cymbal and clamorous kettledrum,
Timbrels and tabrets, all are dumb
That turned the high chill air to flame;
The singing tongues of fire are numb
That called on Cotys by her name

Edonian, till they felt her come
And maddened, and her mystic face
Lightened along the streams of Thrace.

For Pleasure slumberless and pale,
And Passion with rejected veil,
Pass, and the tempest-footed throng
Of hours that follow them with song
Till their feet flag and voices fail,
And lips that were so loud so long
Learn silence, or a wearier wail;

So keen is change, and time so strong,
To weave the robes of life and rend
And weave again till life have end.

But weak is change, but strengthless time,
To take the light from heaven, or climb
The hills of heaven with wasting feet.

Songs they can stop that earth found meet,
But the stars keep their ageless rhyme;
Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet,
But the stars keep their spring sublime;

Passions and pleasures can defeat,
Actions and agonies control,
And life and death, but not the soul.

Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will

Across the waves of day and night
To port or shipwreck, left or right,
By shores and shoals of good and ill;
And still its flame at mainmast height
Through the rent air that foam-flakes fill
Sustains the indomitable light
Whence only man hath strength to steer
Or helm to handle without fear.

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
Across birth's hidden harbour-bar,
Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead;
Save his own soul he hath no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide.

No blast of air or fire of sun
Puts out the light whereby we run
With girdled loins our lamplit race,
And each from each takes heart of grace
And spirit till his turn be done,
And light of face from each man's face
In whom the light of trust is one;
Since only souls that keep their place
By their own light, and watch things roll,
And stand, have light for any soul.

A little time we gain from time
To set our seasons in some chime,
For harsh or sweet or loud or low,
With seasons played out long ago
And souls that in their time and prime
Took part with summer or with snow,

Lived abject lives out or sublime,
 And had their chance of seed to sow
 For service or disservice done
 To those days dead and this their son.

A little time that we may fill
 Or with such good works or such ill
 As loose the bonds or make them strong
 Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
 By rose-hung river and light-foot rill
 There are who rest not; who think long
 Till they discern as from a hill
 At the sun's hour of morning song,
 Known of souls only, and those souls free,
 The sacred spaces of the sea.

1871.

HERTHA

I AM that which began;
 Out of me the years roll;
 Out of me God and man;
 I am equal and whole;

God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am
 the soul.

Before ever land was,
 Before ever the sea,
 Or soft hair of the grass,
 Or fair limbs of the tree,

Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul
 was in me.

First life on my sources
 First drifted and swam;
 Out of me are the forces
 That save it or damn;

Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before
 God was, I am,

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I
am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the
body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure
of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high"?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but
thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which
is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known
of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou has seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on
my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Hath the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds
taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the moun-
tains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother
alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for
all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out
thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought,
and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give
thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshadowing the shadows and
stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless
soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live
and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they
shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,

And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out
their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;

In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves
sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,

And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are
bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,

Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my
blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,

Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-
clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,

All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through
me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or
deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands
and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my
spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of
soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits
of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with
faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the
wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth
now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the
terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown grey from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his
infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom
and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of
my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;

Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man
that is I.

1871.

THE PILGRIMS

- Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which was
That ye sing sadly, or dream of what shall be?
For gladly at once and sadly it seems ye sing.
—Our lady of love by you is un beholden;
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor lips, nor golden
Treasure of hair, nor face nor form; but we
That love, we know her more fair than anything.
- Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?
—Yea, these; that whoso hath seen her shall not live
Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain,
Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;
And when she bids die he shall surely die.
And he shall leave all things under the sky
And go forth naked under sun and rain
And work and wait and watch out all his years.
- Hath she on earth no place of habitation?
—Age to age calling, nation answering nation,
Cries out, Where is she? and there is none to say;
For if she be not in the spirit of men,
For if in the inward soul she hath no place,
In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,
In vain their mouths make much of her; for they
Cry with vain tongues, till the heart lives again.

—O ye that follow, and have ye no repentance?

For on your brows is written a mortal sentence,

An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,

That in your lives ye shall not pause or rest,

Nor have the sure sweet common love, nor keep

Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor sleep.

—These have we not, who have one thing, the divine

Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast.

—And ye shall die before your thrones be won.

—Yea, and the changed world and the liberal sun

Shall move and shine without us, and we lie

Dead; but if she too move on earth and live,

But if the old world with all the old irons rent

Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not content?

Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,

Life being so little and death so good to give.

—And these men shall forget you.—Yea, but we.

Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,

And heaven-high air august, and awful fire,

And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat

But somewhat in it of our blood once shed

Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead

Blood of men slain and the old same life's desire

Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet.

—But ye that might be clothed with all things pleasant,

Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft present,

That clothe yourselves with the cold future air;

When mother and father and tender sister and brother

And the old live love that was shall be as ye,

Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be.

—She shall be yet who is more than all these were,

Than sister or wife or father unto us or mother.

—Is this worth life, is this, to win for wages?

Lo, the dead mouths of the awful grey-grown ages,

The venerable, in the past that is their prison,

In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead:
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen?

—Not we but she, who is tender and swift to save.

—Are ye not weary and faint not by the way,
Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?

Sleepless: and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?

—We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,
Than all things save the inexorable desire

Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

—Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?

Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,
Even this your dream, that by much tribulation

Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks
straight?

—Nay, though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;

But man to man, nation would turn to nation,

And the old life live, and the old great word be great.

—Pass on then and pass by us and let us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?

And if the world fare better will ye know?

And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?

—Enough of light is this for one life's span,

That all men born are mortal, but not man:

And we men bring death lives by night to sow,

That man may reap and eat and live by day.

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA

SEND but a song oversea for us,
Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror;
Send us a song oversea!

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,
And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
And tender as sun-smitten dew;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardours of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
And hale them hearing along,

Make us too music, to be with us
As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
Whose sign bid battle reform;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here;

In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamours of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardour and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man?

One name, not twain for division;
One thing, not twain, from the birth;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth;

Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the centre, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands,
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
Few pulses of hearts reaspire;
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
Wrought not of mail nor of lawn;
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
Kings, and subjects, and shame;
If the God upon you be arisen,
How should our songs be the same?

How, in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
Land, songs praising his name?

God is buried and dead to us,
Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom; so have they said to us,
Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears;
And a God without eyes, without ears,
Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth?

The earth god Freedom, the lonely
Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
Nor scourged with but one life's rod;
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations;
The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
Doth it live not at heart of all things,
The one God and one spirit, a purest
Life, fed from unstanachable springs?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
Name of the soul's there is none;
Surelier it labours, if slower,
Than the metres of star or of sun;
Slower than life into breath,
Surelier than time into death,
It moves till its labour be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
Vision of virtue and crime;

Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
With the stars of the worlds that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
Be as theirs an invariable voice;
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
With the spirit, the star and the sod;
With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
Lives, and that only is God.

1871.

COR CORDIUM

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

1871.

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

MAIDEN most beautiful, mother most bountiful, lady of lands,
Queen and republican, crowned of the centuries whose years
are thy sands,
See for thy sake what we bring to thee, Italy, here in our
hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in the front of thy fight,
Red from the hearts that were pierced for thee, white as thy
mountains are white,
Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting, whose life-blood
is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird fit for the nest,
Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset, for eastward or
west,
Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held yet warm to thy
breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-bearer, eagle or
dove,
Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to the beacon above,
Green as our hope in it, white as our faith in it, red as our love.

Thunder and splendour of lightning are hid in the folds of it
furled;
Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt to be handled and
hurled,
Out of whose lips is the honey, whose bosom the milk of the
world?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with pasture of colour
and song;
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as thy garments
belong;
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as surely deliverance
from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us love as a lamp in our
night,

Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remembrance a flame-
coloured light;

Out of thine eyes thou shalt shew us as surely the sundawn of
right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but once and a word,
None shall not follow thee, none shall not serve thee, not one
that has heard;

Twice hast thou spoken a message, and time is athirst for the
third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou hadst, and thy lordship
made one

North sea and south sea and east men and west men that
look on the sun;

Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul in the nations was
none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the centuries of storm-wind
and foam,

Ages that clashed in the dark with each other, and years
without home;

Empress and prophetess wast thou, and what wilt thou now
be, O Rome?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the love that have need of
thee now,

Shines not thy face with the forethought of freedom, and
burns not thy brow?

Who is against her but all men? and who is beside her but
thou?

Art thou not better than all men? and where shall she turn
but to thee?

Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon from midland to
sea;

Freedom cries out for a sign among nations, and none will be
free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair of her, all without heart—

Stand on her side in the vanward of ages, and strike on her part!

Strike but one stroke for the love of her love of thee, sweet that thou art!

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a strong staff fit for thine hand;

Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul things flock from the land;

Faster than stars from the sun shall they fly, being lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes answer, and rose-tree to rose;

Lily by lily the year becomes perfect; and none of us knows What thing is fairest of all things on earth as it brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all things, in all time is best—Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and suckled hers sons at thy breast;

Take to thy bosom the nations, and there shall the world come to rest.

1871.

“NON DOLET”

It does not hurt. She looked along the knife
Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run
Down the sheer blade; not that which had been done
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,
But that which was to do yet ere the strife
Could end for each for ever, and the sun:
Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won
While pain had power upon her husband's life.

It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more
Than bride to bridegroom; how shalt thou not take
The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?
Was not thy lifeblood given for us before?
And if love's heartblood can avail thy need,
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

1871.

THE OBLATION

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;
All I can give you I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet:
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

1871.

OREITHYIA

Out of the north wind grief came forth,
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.
Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude of this last,
The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.
Out of the north skies full of his cloud,

With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd
At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,
At the axle of a strong king's car
That has girded on the girdle of war—
With hands that lightened the skies in sunder
And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,
A God, a great God strange of name,
With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,
To the mountain bed of a maiden came,
Oreithyia, the bride mismated,
Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed
With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth dead;
Without garland, without glory, without song,
As a fawn by night on the hills belated,
Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail
At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,
When his breath that darkens air made a havoc of her hair,
It rang from the mountain even to the wave;
Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me!*
From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea:
And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,
As a virgin overborne with shame,
She besought him by her spouseless fame,
By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried,
And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,
And all her flower of body, born
To match the maidenhood of morn,
With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and torn.
Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision
Falling by night in his old friends' sight,
To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light;
Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour
Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,
And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.

With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his lips as of
thunder,

In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,
From the height of the heaven that was rent with the roar of
his coming in sunder,

Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.

And the pines of the hills were as green reeds shattered,
And their branches as buds of the soft spring scattered,
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the south,
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,

At the cry of his coming out of heaven.

And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows

Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,

And the depths of the sea were aghast, and whitened,

And the crowns of their waves were as flame that lightened,

And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.

But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not her wrong
that he wrought her,

When her locks as leaves were shed before his breath,
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the cry was
a God's that besought her,

Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas with death.

For the heart was molten within her to hear,

And her knees beneath her were loosened for fear,

And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,

And the soft new bloom of the green earth's daughter

Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree;

As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast lifted,

On the strength of the stream of his dark breath drifted,

From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,

With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother,

As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

STORM AND BATTLE

LET us lift up the strength of our hearts in song,
And our souls to the height of the darkling day.
If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,
Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,
Though the prow reel round and the helm point wrong,
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.

For the steersman time sits hidden astern,
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume
As the blast shears off and the oar-blades churn
The foam of our lives that to death return,
Blown back as they break to the gulping gloom.

What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow, what
sound,
From the world beyond earth, from the night
underground,
That scatters from wings un beholden the weight of its dark-
ness around?

For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its eye,
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an end be
not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to see and
to hear
What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals mine ear?
O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not shrunk up
and withered for fear?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds are in quest
by day,
And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them crying for
their prey,
And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of his
course as a blind man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine;
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts of the
 sea
By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,
So black behind them the live storm serried
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the terror
 to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave birth?
O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it, help us or
 hide.
As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his tide.

O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,
For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given us
 again?
O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-faring
 ships by night,
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast of thy
 breath?
A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of death,
For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father, who finds
 thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of our cry;
Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war be
 dry;
Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foemen, the
 sword of their strength and the shield;
As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks of ships,
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the breath
 of thy lips,
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with raiment
 the face of the sword-ploughed field.

O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born with the day,
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged for the
 same wide way,
Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou hast mar-
 shalled from northward for prey.

From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the mists of
 the fountains of night,
From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps laughing, on
 fire for his flight,
Come down with their doom in thine hand on the ships thou
 hast brought up against us to fight.

For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of spears begun,
And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning out-
 lightens the sun.

From the springs of the morning it thunders and lightens
 across and afar

To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of the last
 low star.

With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earthquake of
 men that meet,

Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows take fire
 from his feet.

Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the hollows of
 rocks are afraid,

And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as waves in a
 storm-wind swayed.

From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge and the
 dark loud shore,

Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling of
 wheels that roar.

As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that foam as
 they gnash

Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the poles
 that crash.

The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of the mad
 steeds champ,

Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's foot
rings in their tramp.

For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is arrayed for
the fight,

Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering as clouds
in the night.

Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets, with dark-
ness mine eyes,

At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens the roar
of the sky's.

White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse against
horse reels hurled,

And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for the spoil
of the world.

And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of chariots
that founder on land,

And the horsemen are broken with breach as of breakers, and
scattered as sand.

Through the roar and recoil of the charges that mingle their
cries and confound,

Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash through the
darkness of sound.

As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways with the
wind as it swells

Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers that clash
with their bells;

And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the burst of
the wave as it shocks

Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar of the
surge on the rocks:

And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war, and their
corseleted breasts,

Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten the
storm with their crests,

Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the shipwrecking
wind as they rise,

Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that slays as it dies.

So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the fire of their breath,

And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright with the lightnings of death;

And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the jaws of its gulf are as graves,

And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane on the ridges of waves:

And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a dewfall of blood

As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the manslaying flood.

And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields of the sea by night

When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day nigh dead,

What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath muffled thine head?

O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off thy wrath by what name,

With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward the sea-man adrift

With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen have wasted with flame?

Arise now, lift up thy light; give ear to us, put forth thine hand, Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for the night of the land.

Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the dead;

O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our dread.

Who hath blinded thee? who hath prevailed on thee? who hath ensnared?

Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy battle
prepared?

Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for thine
arm that was bared?

Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might of thy
master declared.

O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of day,

What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its garland away?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed of the
light,

And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet of night?
Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and goaded
their flanks with affright,

To the race of a course that we know not on ways that are hid
from our sight.

As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their chariot
are whirled,

And the light of its passage is night on the face of the world.

And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help from on
high,

But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of thine eye.

For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water bows
down and goes by,

To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us un-
timely to die.

But what light is it now leaps forth on the land

Enkindling the waters and ways of the air

From thy forehead made bare,

From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand?

Hast thou set not thy right hand again to the string,

With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring

And the barbed shaft drawn,

Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring

That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,

O huntsman, O king,

When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase

As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn?

He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,

And the clouds are shot through with the fires of his hands,
And the height of the hollow of heaven that he fills
As the heart of a strong man is quickened and thrills;
High over the folds of the low-lying lands,
On the shadowless hills
As a guard on his watchtower he stands.
All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might:
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight
Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight
With presage of peace to come.
Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,
That joy out of woe
May arise as the spring out of tempest and snow,
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-red
Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,
Or the wrath of its lord have end.
For the season is full now of death or of birth,
To bring forth life, or an end of all;
And we know not if anything stand or fall
That is girdled about with the round sea's girth
As a town with its wall;
But thou that art highest of the Gods most high,
That art lord if we live, that art lord though we die,
Have heed of the tongues of our terror that cry
For a grace to the children of Earth.

1876.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

IN a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.

A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briars if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,

Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
 Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
 As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
 Death lies dead.

1876.

1878.

RELICS

THIS flower that smells of honey and the sea,
 White laurustine, seems in my hand to be
 A white star made of memory long ago
 Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies love used to know
 Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show
 What flowers my heart was full of in the days
 That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
 Half hearkening what the buried season says
 Out of the world of the unapparent dead
 Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy star-white brethren bred
 Nigh where the last of all the land made head
 Against the sea, a keen-faced promontory,
 Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled sea-dews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory;
 The wind that sang them all his stormy story
 Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,
 And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,
 They laughed out at the years that could not slay,
 Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,
 And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers
A keen-edged odour of the sun and showers
Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb
Made sweet for months of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb
They showed like windfalls of the snow-soft foam,
Or feathers from the weary south-wind's wing,
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring?
If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing?

For some sign surely thou too hast to bear,
Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were
Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,
Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,
Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew there?

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,
By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for whom?
There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,
An odour as of love and of love's doom.

Of days more sweet than thou wast sweet to smell,
Of flower-soft thoughts that came to flower and fell,
Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,
Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountain-side
That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide
At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers
Takes in the morning to its heart of pride!

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,
And of the fair town called of the Fair Towers,
A word for me of my San Gimignano,
A word of April's greenest-girdled hours.

Of the old breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,

Though time with soft feet break them stone by stone,
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.

Of the old cliff overcome and overgrown
That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,
That garment of acacias made for May,
Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,
How king-like they stood up into the day!

How sweet the day was with them, and the night!
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,
And this that lived upon Italian light,

Before I throw them and these words away,
Who knows but I what memories too take flight?

1873.

1878.

AT A MONTH'S END

THE night last night was strange and shaken:

More strange the change of you and me.

Once more, for the old love's love forsaken,

We went out once more toward the sea.

For the old love's love-sake dead and buried,

One last time, one more and no more,

We watched the waves set in, the serried

Spears of the tide storming the shore.

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,

Heard hardly through the windy night

Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,

Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,
The clashing channels rocked and rang
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,
And all the choral water sang.

Faint lights fell this way, that way floated,
Quick sparks of sea-fire keen like eyes
From the rolled surf that flashed, and noted
Shores and faint cliffs and bays and skies.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying
With weak heart heaved up once in death—

The rustling sand and shingle shaken
With light sweet touches and small sound—
These could not move us, could not waken
Hearts to look forth, eyes to look round.

Silent we went an hour together,
Under grey skies by waters white.
Our hearts were full of windy weather,
Clouds and blown stars and broken light.

Full of cold clouds and moonbeams drifted
And streaming storms and straying fires,
Our souls in us were stirred and shifted
By doubts and dreams and foiled desires.

Across, aslant, a scudding sea-mew
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the sea:
And one with me I could not dream you;
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white wave's fringes
Touched and slid over and flashed past—
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges
From the moon's lowest light and last--

As a star feels the sun and falters,
Touched to death by diviner eyes—
As on the old gods' untended altars
The old fire of withered worship dies—

(Once only, once the shrine relighted
Sees the last fiery shadow shine,
Last shadow of flame and faith benighted,
Sees falter and flutter and fail the shrine)

So once with fiery breath and flying
Your winged heart touched mine and went,
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,
Sundered and smiled and were content.

That only touch, that feeling only,
Enough we found, we found too much;
For the unlit shrine is hardly lonely
As one the old fire forgets to touch.

Slight as the sea's sight of the sea-mew,
Slight as the sun's sight of the star:
Enough to show one must not deem you
For love's sake other than you are.

Who snares and tames with fear and danger
A bright beast of a fiery kin,
Only to mar, only to change her
Sleek supple soul and splendid skin?

Easy with blows to mar and maim her,
Easy with bonds to bind and bruise;
What profit, if she yield her tamer
The limbs to mar, the soul to lose?

Best leave or take the perfect creature,
Take all she is or leave complete;
Transmute you will not form or feature,
Change feet for wings or wings for feet.

Strange eyes, new limbs, can no man give her;
Sweet is the sweet thing as it is.
No soul she hath, we see, to outlive her;
Hath she for that no lips to kiss?

So may one read his weird, and reason,
And with vain drugs assuage no pain.
For each man in his loving season
Fools and is fooled of these in vain.

Charms that allay not any longing,
Spells that appease not any grief,
Time brings us all by handfuls, wronging
All hurts with nothing of relief.

Ah, too soon shot, the fool's bolt misses!
What help? the world is full of loves;
Night after night of running kisses,
Chirp after chirp of changing doves.

Should Love disown or disesteem you
For loving one man more or less?
You could not tame your light white sea-mew,
Nor I my sleek black pantheress.

For a new soul let whoso please pray,
We are what life made us, and shall be.
For you the jungle and me the sea-spray,
And south for you and north for me.

But this one broken foam-white feather
I throw you off the hither wing,
Splashed stiff with sea-scurf and salt weather,
This song for sleep to learn and sing—

Sing in your ear when, daytime over,
You, couched at long length on hot sand
With some sleek sun-discoloured lover,
Wince from his breath as from a brand:

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,
And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,
The deep flank smoothes its dimpling creases,
And passion loosens all the limbs:

Till dreams of sharp grey north-sea weather
Fall faint upon your fiery sleep,
As on strange sands a strayed bird's feather
The wind may choose to lose or keep.

But I, who leave my queen of panthers,
As a tired honey-heavy bee
Gilt with sweet dust from gold-grained anthers
Leaves the rose-chalice, what for me?

From the ardours of the chaliced centre,
From the amorous anthers' golden grime,
That scorch and smutch all wings that enter,
I fly forth hot from honey-time.

But as to a bee's gilt thighs and winglets
The flower-dust with the flower-smell clings;
As a snake's mobile rampant ringlets
Leave the sand marked with print of rings;

So to my soul in surer fashion
Your savage stamp and savour hangs;
The print and perfume of old passion,
The wild-beast mark of panther's fangs.

1871.

1878.

A WASTED VIGIL

I

COULDST thou not watch with me one hour? Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea;
Couldst thou not watch with me?

II

What, not one hour? for star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight;
They die, and day survives, and what of thee?
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

III

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun;
Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree;
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

IV

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,
Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine;
Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free;
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

V

Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were we!
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

VI

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows!
Who now saith to thee, moon? or who saith, rose?
O dust and ashes, once found fair to see!
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

VII

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell!
With me it is not, is it with thee well?
O sea-drift blown from windward back to lee!
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

VIII

The old year's dead hands are full of their dead flowers,
The old days are full of dead old loves of ours,
Born as a rose, and briefer born than she;
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

IX

Could two days live again of that dead year,
One would say, seeking us and passing here,
Where is she? and one answering, *Where is he?*
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

X

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere;
If we were they, none knows us what we were,
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee.
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

XI

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse;
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee;
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

XII

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast;
But stars endure after the moon is past.
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch three?
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

XIII

What of the night? The night is full, the tide
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide;
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee;
 Couldst thou not watch with me?

XIV

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways;
 Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
 Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be;
 Thou couldst not watch with me.

1867.

1878.

AVE ATQUE VALE

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
 Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
 Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
 Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
 Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

Les Fleurs du Mal.

I

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
 Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
 Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
 Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
 Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
 Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
 Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
 Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
 And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
 To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
 Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
 Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
 Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
 Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
 The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
 That knows not where is that Leucadian grave

Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

V

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,

No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter

From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,

I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poet's pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunseting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.

Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden

Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
 Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
 Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
 Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
 Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
 Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
 Among the days departed?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
 Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
 Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
 And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
 With sadder than the Niobeian womb,
 And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
 Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
 There lies not any troublous thing before,
 Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
 For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
 All waters as the shore.

1868.

1878.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL

(OCTOBER 4, 1874)

I

IN the garden of death, where the singers whose names are
 deathless
 One with another make music unheard of men,
 Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long breath-
 less,
 And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or change
 again,
 Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-white
 years?
 What music is this that the world of the dead men hears?

II

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,
Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was sweet,
Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made sunny,
To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad ghosts
meet,
Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and rest,
No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

III

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and brightened,
As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower of his
song;
For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares were
lightened,
For the hearts' sake blest that have fostered his name so
long;
By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his name,
And clothed with their praise and crowned with their love for
fame.

IV

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close not,
That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by night,
As a thought in the heart shall increase when the heart's self
knows not,
Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as a light;
Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons' chime,
As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of time.

V

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet songs' sake;
The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all shall take.¹
They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang them dumb.

¹ Sydney Dobell died August 22, 1874.

VI

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and famous,
 To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of death;
 But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to shame
 us,

Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack breath.
 For with us shall the music and perfume that die not dwell,
 Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we farewell.

1874.

1878.

EX-VOTO

WHEN their last hour shall rise
 Pale on these mortal eyes,
 Herself like one that dies,
 And kiss me dying
 The cold last kiss, and fold
 Close round my limbs her cold
 Soft shade as raiment rolled
 And leave them lying.

If aught my soul would say
 Might move to hear me pray
 The birth-god of my day
 That he might hearken,
 This grace my heart should crave,
 To find no landward grave
 That worldly springs make brave,
 World's winters darken,

Nor grow through gradual hours
 The cold blind seed of flowers
 Made by new beams and showers
 From limbs that moulder,
 Nor take my part with earth,
 But find for death's new birth
 A bed of larger girth,
 More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
 Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
 The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me
 A song for ever,
A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,
 To fail them never:

Not while on this side death
I hear what either saith
And drink of either's breath
 With heart's thanksgiving
That in my veins like wine
Some sharp salt blood of thine,
Some springtide pulse of brine,
 Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh
Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,
Grudged I so much to die
 This death as others?
Was it no ease to think
The chalice from whose brink
Fate gave me death to drink
 Was thine,—my mother's?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,
Fair as thy fairest birth,
More than thy worthiest worth,
 We call, we know thee,

More sweet and just and dread
Than live men highest of head
Or even thy holiest dead
Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,
The dewfall on the leaf,
All joy, all grace, all grief,
Are thine for giving;
Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph; tares with corn,
Dead seed with living:

All good and ill things done
In eyeshot of the sun
At last in thee made one
Rest well contented;
All words of all man's breath
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free;
But who shall make the sea
Serve even in seeming?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
Fresh wine's foam streaming?

What oldworld son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
With lips of laughter?
Thy blood they drink; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again;
For wine in feasts, and then
 In fields for slaughter;
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
 The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,
 Freshets or shallows;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and hern
 The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
 One with another;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
 Me too, my mother.

1877.

— 1878.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
 Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
 Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
 And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
 Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
 And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
 Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
 Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
 What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
 Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
 It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
 And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
 It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
 The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
 And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
 No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,
 Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
 To sleep for a season and hear no word
 Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
 Only the song of a secret bird.

1876.

1878.

A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

BIRD of the bitter bright grey golden morn
 Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
 First of us all and sweetest singer born
 Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
 Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
 When song new-born put off the old world's attire
 And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
 Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
 Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
 That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
 And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
 And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers
 Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
 Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
 When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
 Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
 Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
 Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
 Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
 That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers
 Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
 What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
 That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire
 On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
 But left more sweet than roses to respire,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
 A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
 Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
 But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
 Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

1877.

1878.

SONG

Love laid his sleepless head
 On a thorny rosy bed;
 And his eyes with tears were red,
 And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
 Kept watch by his head forlorn,
 Till the night was overworn
 And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day
 And kissed Love's lips as he lay,
 And the watchers ghostly and grey
 Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,
 And his lips waxed ruddy as light:
 Sorrow may reign for a night,
 But day shall bring back delight.

1874.

1878.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER

I

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
 Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
 Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
 Be not too long irresolute to be;
 O mother-month, where have they hidden thee?
 Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose
 I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands,
 I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
 The purplest of the prime;
 I lean my soul down over them, with hands
 Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers;
 I send my love back to the lovely time.

II

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?
 Veiled with what visions while the grey world grieves,
 Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,

What warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?
What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,
Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
The tender-coloured night draws hardly breath,
The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV

As sweet desire of day before the day,
As dreams of love before the true love born,
From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
And kindles with her own mouth's colouring
The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

V

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
Shall put at last the deadly days to death
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
To change the cold heart of the weary time,
To stir and soften all the time to tears,
Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
With feet not swifter than those fair first years
Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

VI

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
One good thing youth has given and borne away;
I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's retrodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

VII

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were;

These may'st thou not give back for ever; these,
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

1875.

1878.

AT PARTING

For a day and a night Love sang to us, played with us,
Folded us round from the dark and the light;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he hidden us,
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had
chidden us
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us:
Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us;
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;
Love can but last in us here at his height
For a day and a night.

1875.

1878.

CHILD'S SONG

WHAT is gold worth, say,
Worth for work or play,
Worth to keep or pay,

Hide or throw away,
 Hope about or fear?
 What is love worth, pray?
 Worth a tear?

Golden on the mould
 Lie the dead leaves rolled
 Of the wet woods old,
 Yellow leaves and cold,
 Woods without a dove;
 Gold is worth but gold;
 Love's worth love.

1878.

FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS

I. WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND

I

OUTSIDE the garden
 The wet skies harden;
 The gates are barred on
 The summer side:
 "Shut out the flower-time,
 Sunbeam and shower-time;
 Make way for our time,"
 Wild winds have cried.
 Green once and cheery,
 The woods, worn weary,
 Sigh as the dreary
 Weak sun goes home:
 A great wind grapples
 The wave, and dapples
 The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

II

Through fell and moorland,
 And salt-sea foreland,

Our noisy norland
 Resounds and rings;
Waste waves thereunder
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
 With cloudwide wings;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer;
Nor sail nor swimmer
 Can try the tides;
And snowdrifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,

Under the heather the sundew hides.

III

Green land and red land,
Moorside and headland,
Are white as dead land,
 Are all as one;
Nor honied heather,
Nor bells to gather,
Fair with fair weather
 And faithful sun:
Fierce frost has eaten
All flowers that sweeten
The fells rain-beaten;
 And winds their foes
Have made the snow's bed
Down in the rose-bed;

Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose.

IV

Bury her deeper
Than any sleeper;
Sweet dreams will keep her
 All day, all night;
Though sleep benumb her

And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping
In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
And no leaves cling;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

v

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
Her soft low bed;
She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
From foot to head;
She turns not chilly
Like weed and lily
In marsh or hilly
High watershed,
Or green soft island
In lakes of highland;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

vi

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
And fairies all;
When frost entrapped her,
They came and lapped her
In leaves, and wrapped her
With shroud and pall;

In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
A death-knell rang;
Rang the death-bell for her,
Sang, "is it well for her,

Well, is it well with you, rose?" they sang.

VII

O what and where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
So wild the sky?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
The winter's cry;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow;
Fain would she follow
And fain would fly:
But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals;

Had she but wings, and she would not die.

VIII

Come, as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
And forth again
Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,
Through lowering lances
Of bright white rain;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime,
As if the Maytime

Were here to sing;
As if the snowballs
Were soft like blowballs,
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

IX

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen,
The fields it flows in
Are hard and black;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
And thaws come back.
"O sister, water,"
The wind besought her,
"O twin-born daughter
Of spring with me,
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me,
Straight for the summer and oversea."

X

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary
The patient fairy
Of water waits;
All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
Unbar the gates;
Till, as with clamour
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates.

XI

In fierce March weather
White waves break tether,
And whirled together
At either hand,
Like weeds uplifted,
The tree-trunks rifted
In spars are drifted,
Like foam or sand,
Past swamp and shallow
And reed-beds callow,
Through pool and shallow,
To wind and lee,
Till, no more tongue-tied,
Full flood and young tide

Roar down the rapids and storm the sea.

XII

As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
The lords of fight;
When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
At mainmast height;
When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
Of swift sea-kings;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor

Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

XIII

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheek turns paler

For wind or hail or
For fear of thee?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer,
Thy songs are rarer
Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
And ways of fear,
Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

XIV

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
Children that sleep,
Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them;
Shall not God care for them,
Angels not keep?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges;
Spare us the dirges
Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us:
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

XV

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land-waster,
For all thine haste, or
Thy stormy skill,
Yet hast thou never,

For all endeavour,
Strength to dis sever
Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
What ours fulfil;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder;
Who made our wonder to work his will.

XVI

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
His nights and days,
Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing;
Time in its going,
While time shall be;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.
1867. 1878.

2. SPRING IN TUSCANY

ROSE-RED lilies that bloom on the banner;
Rose-cheeked gardens that revel in spring;
Rose-mouthed acacias that laugh as they climb,
Like plumes for a queen's hand fashioned to fan her
With wind more soft than a wild dove's wing,
What do they sing in the spring of their time?

If this be the rose that the world hears singing,
Soft in the soft night, loud in the day,
Songs for the fire-flies to dance as they hear;
If that be the song of the nightingale, springing
Forth in the form of a rose in May,
What do they say of the way of the year?

What of the way of the world gone Maying,
What of the work of the buds in the bowers,
What of the will of the wind on the wall,
Fluttering the wall-flowers, sighing and playing,
Shrinking again as a bird that cowers,
Thinking of hours when the flowers have to fall?

Out of the throats of the loud birds showering,
Out of the folds where the flag-lilies leap,
Out of the mouths of the roses stirred,
Out of the herbs on the walls reflowering,
Out of the heights where the sheer snows sleep,
Out of the deep and the steep, one word.

One from the lips of the lily-flames leaping,
The glad red lilies that burn in our sight,
The great live lilies for standard and crown;
One from the steeps where the pines stand sleeping,
One from the deep land, one from the height,
One from the light and the might of the town.

The lowlands laugh with delight of the highlands,
Whence May winds feed them with balm and breath
From hills that beheld in the years behind
A shape as of one from the blest souls' islands,
Made fair by a soul too fair for death,
With eyes on the light that should smite them blind.

Vallombrosa remotely remembers,
Perchance, what still to us seems so near
That time not darkens it, change not mars,
The foot that she knew when her leaves were September's,
The face lift up to the star-blind seer,
That saw from his prison arisen his stars.

And Pisa broods on her dead, not mourning,
For love of her loveliness given them in fee;
And Prato gleams with the glad monk's gift
Whose hand was there as the hand of morning;
And Siena, set in the sand's red sea,
Lifts loftier her head than the red sand's drift.

And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers,
At sunset over the love-lit lands,
The hill-side's crown where the wild hill brightens,
Saint Fina's town of the Beautiful Towers,
Hailing the sun with a hundred hands.

Land of us all that have loved thee dearest,
Mother of men that were lords of man,
Whose name in the world's heart works as a spell,
My last song's light, and the star of mine earliest,
As we turn from thee, sweet, who wast ours for a span,
Fare well we may not who say farewell.

1878.

3. SUMMER IN AUVERGNE

THE sundawn fills the land
Full as a feaster's hand
Fills full with bloom of bland
Bright wine his cup;
Flows full to flood that fills
From the arch of air it thrills
Those rust-red iron hills
With morning up.

Dawn, as a panther springs,
With fierce and fire-fledged wings
Leaps on the land that rings
From her bright feet

Through all its lava-black
Cones that cast answer back
And cliffs of footless track
Where thunders meet.

The light speaks wide and loud
From deeps blown clean of cloud
As though days' heart were proud
And heaven's were glad;
The towers brown-striped and grey
Take fire from heaven of day
As though the prayers they pray
Their answers had.

Higher in these high first hours
Wax all the keen church towers,
And higher all hearts of ours
Than the old hills' crown,
Higher than the pillared height
Of that strange cliff-side bright
With basalt towers whose might
Strong time bows down.

And the old fierce ruin there
Of the old wild princes' lair
Whose blood in mine hath share
Gapes gaunt and great
Toward heaven that long ago
Watched all the wan land's woe
Whereon the wind would blow
Of their bleak hate.

Dead are those deeds; but yet
Their memory seems to fret
Lands that might else forget
That old world's brand;
Dead all their sins and days;
Yet in this red clime's rays
Some fiery memory stays
That sears their land.

4. AUTUMN IN CORNWALL

THE year lies fallen and faded
On cliffs by clouds invaded,
With tongues of storms upbraided,
 With wrath of waves bedinned;
And inland, wild with warning,
As in deaf ears or scorning,
The clarion even and morning
 Rings of the south-west wind.

The wild bents wane and wither
In blasts whose breath bows hither
Their grey-grown heads and thither,
 Unblest of rain or sun;
The pale fierce heavens are crowded
With shapes like dreams beclouded,
As though the old year enshrouded
 Lay, long ere life were done.

Full-charged with oldworld wonders,
From dusk Tintagel thunders
A note that smites and sunders
 The hard frore fields of air;
A trumpet stormier-sounded
Than once from lists rebounded
When strong men sense-confounded
 Fell thick in tourney there.

From scarce a duskier dwelling
Such notes of wail rose welling
Through the outer darkness, telling
 In the awful singer's ears
What souls the darkness covers,
What love-lost souls of lovers,
Whose cry still hangs and hovers
 In each man's born that hears.

For there by Hector's brother
 And yet some thousand other
 He that had grief to mother
 Passed pale from Dante's sight;
 With one fast linked as fearless,
 Perchance, there only tearless;
 Iseult and Tristram, peerless
 And perfect queen and knight.

A shrill-winged sound comes flying
 North, as of wild souls crying
 The cry of things undying,
 That know what life must be;
 Or as the old year's heart, stricken
 Too sore for hope to quicken
 By thoughts like thorns that thicken,
 Broke, breaking with the sea.

1878.

THALASSIUS

UPON the flowery forefront of the year,
 One wandering by the grey-green April sea
 Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand
 Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
 Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
 Along the foam-flowered strand
 Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
 Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
 A babe asleep with flower-soft face that gleamed
 To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
 Too sure of either love for either's fear,
 Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
 Nor man nor mortal child of man, but fair
 As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
 That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
 The last time ere that year,
 Out of the flame of morn Cymothoë

Beheld one brighter than the sunbright sphere
Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod
The live sun's very God,
Across the foam-bright water-ways that are
As heavenlier heavens with star for answering star,
And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth
Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South
And heard above afar
A noise of songs and wind-enamoured wings
And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
And round the resonant radiance of his car
Where depth is one with height,
Light heard as music, music seen as light.
And with that second moondawn of the spring's
That fosters the first rose,
A sun-child whiter than the sunlit snows
Was born out of the world of sunless things
That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.

But he that found the sea-flower by the sea
And took to foster like a graft of earth
Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,
Free-born as winds and stars and waves are free;
A warrior grey with glories more than years,
Though more of years than change the quick to dead
Had rained their light and darkness on his head;
A singer that in time's and memory's ears
Should leave such words to sing as all his peers
Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears
Till all the days of human flight were fled.
And at his knees his fosterling was fed
Not with man's wine and bread
Nor mortal mother-milk of hopes and fears,
But food of deep memorial days long sped;
For bread with wisdom and with song for wine
Clear as the full calm's emerald hyaline.
And from his grave glad lips the boy would gather
Fine honey of song-notes goldener than gold,

More sweet than bees make of the breathing heather,
That he, as glad and bold,
Might drink as they, and keep his spirit from cold.
And the boy loved his laurel-laden hair
As his own father's risen on the eastern air,
And that less white brow-binding bayleaf bloom
More than all flowers his father's eyes relume;
And those high songs he heard,
More than all notes of any landward bird,
More than all sounds less free
Than the wind's quiring to the choral sea.

High things the high song taught him; how the breath
Too frail for life may be more strong than death;
And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams
As a ghost's glory in dreams,
More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,
By that strong faith of lordliest love which gives
To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
Than shines or strikes from any man that lives.
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly:
And he that much less loves it than he hates
All wrongdoing that is done
Anywhere always underneath the sun
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.
One fairer thing he shewed him, and in might
More strong than day and night
Whose strengths build up time's towering period:
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
Which if man had not, then should God not be:
And that was Liberty.
And gladly should man die to gain, he said,
Freedom; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves:

But all of all that is,
Were one man free in body and soul, were his.

And the song softened, even as heaven by night
Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,
And with its moonbright breath
Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death.
Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse
In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues
The sea's line and the land's line and the sky's,
And light for love of darkness almost dies,
As darkness only lives for light's dear love,
Whose hands the web of night is woven of,
So in that heaven of wondrous words were life
And death brought out of strife;
Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase
Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn
Flashes, and even with lightning of the wind
Night's thick-spun web is thinned
And all its weft unwoven and overworn
Shrinks, as might love from scorn.
And as when wind and light on water and land
Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,
And with the sound and splendour of their leap
Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,
And burn it up with fire;
So with the light that lightened from the lyre
Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred
And blown with blasts of music into flame
Till even his sense became
Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird
Whose song calls night by name.
And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that make men of gods and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him: love that turns
God's heart toward man as man's to Godward; love
That life and death and life are fashioned of,
From the first breath that burns
Half kindled on the flowerlike yeanling's lip,
So light and faint that life seems like to slip,
To that yet weaklier drawn
When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn.
But the man dying not wholly as all men dies
If aught be left of his in live men's eyes
Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise;
If aught of deed or word
Be seen for all time or of all time heard.
Love, that though body and soul were overthrown
Should live for love's sake of itself alone,
Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,
Not wholly annihilated.
Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre
Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire
And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame
Till its own heart its own heat overcame,
Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span,
As such men dying outlive themselves in man,
Outlive themselves for ever; if the heat
Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet
Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit
Forth of the body of it
Into some new shape of a strange perfume
More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,
How shall not something of that soul relive,
That only soul that had such gifts to give
As lighten something even of all men's doom
Even from the labouring womb
Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb?
And these the loving light of song and love
Shall wrap and lap round and impend above,
Imperishable; and all springs born illumine
Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove

To music, when the hillside winds resume
The marriage-song of heather-flower and broom
And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song too taught him: hate of all
That brings or holds in thrall
Of spirit or flesh, free-born ere God began,
The holy body and sacred soul of man.
And wheresoever a curse was or a chain,
A throne for torment or a crown for bane
Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,
There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set
Inexorably, to faint not or forget
Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein
In flesh that none should call a king's again,
Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plague-strike air
Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him: hope whose eyes
Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies
Inaccessible of eyesight; that can see
What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea
Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one
Can speak not to the sun.
For in her sovereign eyelight all things are
Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star
That marries morn and even and winter and spring
With one love's golden ring.
For she can see the days of man, the birth
Of good and death of evil things on earth
Inevitable and infinite, and sure
As present pain is, or herself is pure.
Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things
That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings
Through the awful circle of wheel-winged periods,
The tempest of the twilight of all Gods:
And higher than all the circling course they ran
The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song too taught him; fear to be
Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea
That bred him fearless, like a sea-mew reared
In rocks of man's foot feared,
Where nought of wingless life may sing or shine.
Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had
When all the life in all his limbs was glad
And all the drops in all his veins were wine
And all the pulses music; when his heart,
Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part
In one live song's reiteration, and they bore:
Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore
When the winds loved him and the waters knew,
The blithest life that clove their blithe life through
With living limbs exultant, or held strife
More amorous than all dalliance aye anew
With the bright breath and strength of their large life,
With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,
All glories of all storms of the air that fell
Prone, ineluctable,
With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue
As of a heaven turned hell.
For when the red blast of their breath had made
All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,
He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings: nor could bear
But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,
The joy that like a garment wrapped him round
And lapped him over and under
With raiment of great light
And rapture of great sound
At every loud leap earthward of the thunder
From heaven's most furthest bound:
So seemed all heaven in hearing and in sight,
Alive and mad with glory and angry joy,

That something of its marvellous mirth and might
Moved even to madness, fledged as even for flight,
The blood and spirit of one but mortal boy.

So, clothed with love and fear that love makes great,
And armed with hope and hate,
He set first foot upon the spring-flowered ways
That all feet pass and praise.
And one dim dawn between the winter and spring,
In the sharp harsh wind harrying heaven and earth
To put back April that had borne his birth
From sunward on her sunniest shower-struck wing,
With tears and laughter for the dew-dropt thing,
Slight as indeed a dew-drop, by the sea
One met him lovelier than all men may be,
God-featured, with god's eyes; and in their might
Somewhat that drew men's own to mar their sight,
Even of all eyes drawn toward him: and his mouth
Was as the very rose of all men's youth,
One rose of all the rose-beds in the world:
But round his brows the curls were snakes that curled,
And like his tongue a serpent's; and his voice
Speaks death, and bids rejoice.
Yet then he spake no word, seeming as dumb,
A dumb thing mild and hurtless; nor at first
From his bowed eyes seemed any light to come,
Nor his meek lips for blood or tears to thirst:
But as one blind and mute in mild sweet wise
Pleading for pity of piteous lips and eyes,
He strayed with faint bare lily-lovely feet
Helpless, and flowerlike sweet:
Nor might man see, not having word hereof,
That this of all gods was the great god Love.

And seeing him lovely and like a little child
That wellnigh wept for wonder that it smiled
And was so feeble and fearful, with soft speech
The youth bespake him softly; but there fell

From the sweet lips no sweet word audible
That ear or thought might reach:
No sound to make the dim cold silence glad,
No breath to thaw the hard harsh air with heat;
Only the saddest smile of all things sweet,
Only the sweetest smile of all things sad.

And so they went together one green way
Till April dying made free the world for May;
And on his guide suddenly Love's face turned,
And in his blind eyes burned
Hard light and heat of laughter; and like flame
That opens in a mountain's ravening mouth
To blear and sear the sunlight from the south,
His mute mouth opened, and his first word came:
"Knowest thou me now by name?"
And all his stature waxed immeasurable,
As of one shadowing heaven and lightening hell;
And statelier stood he than a tower that stands
And darkens with its darkness far-off sands
Whereon the sky leans red;
And with a voice that stilled the winds he said:
"I am he that was thy lord before thy birth,
I am he that is thy lord till thou turn earth:
I make the night more dark, and all the morrow
Dark as the night whose darkness was my breath:
O fool, my name is sorrow;
Thou fool, my name is death."

And he that heard spake not, and looked right on
Again, and Love was gone.

Through many a night toward many a wearier day
His spirit bore his body down its way.
Through many a day toward many a wearier night
His soul sustained his sorrows in her sight.
And earth was bitter, and heaven, and even the sea
Sorrowful even as he.

And the wind helped not, and the sun was dumb;
And with too long stress of grief to be
His heart grew sere and numb.

And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank
At stardawn standing on a grey sea-bank
He felt the wind fitfully shift and heave
As toward a stormier eve;
And all the wan wide sea shuddered; and earth
Shook underfoot as toward some timeless birth,
Intolerable and inevitable; and all
Heaven, darkling, trembled like a stricken thrall.
And far out of the quivering east, and far
From past the moonrise and its guiding star,
Began a noise of tempest and a light
That was not of the lightning; and a sound
Rang with it round and round
That was not of the thunder; and a flight
As of blown clouds by night,
That was not of them; and with songs and cries
That sang and shrieked their soul out at the skies
A shapeless earthly storm of shapes began
From all ways round to move in on the man,
Clamorous against him silent; and their feet
Were as the wind's are fleet,
And their shrill songs were as wild birds' are sweet.

And as when all the world of earth was wronged
And all the host of all men driven afoam
By the red hand of Rome,
Round some fierce amphitheatre overthronged
With fair clear faces full of bloodier lust
Than swells and stings the tiger when his mood
Is fieriest after blood
And drunk with trampling of the murderous must
That soaks and stains the tortuous close-coiled wood
Made monstrous with its myriad-mustering brood,
Face by fair face panted and gleamed and pressed,

And breast by passionate breast
Heaved hot with ravenous rapture, as they quaffed
The red ripe full fume of the deep live draught,
The sharp quick reek of keen fresh bloodshed, blown
Through the dense deep drift up to the emperor's throne
From the under steaming sands
With clamour of all-applausive throats and hands,
Mingling in mirthful time
With shrill blithe mockeries of the lithe-limbed mime:
So from somewhence far forth of the un beholden,
Dreadfully driven from over and after and under,
Fierce, blown through fives of brazen blast and golden,
With sound of chiming waves that drown the thunder
Or thunder that strikes dumb the sea's own chimes,
Began the bellowing of the bull-voiced mimes,
Terrible; firs bowed down as briars or palms
Even at the breathless blast as of a breeze
Fulfilled with clamour and clangour and storms of psalms;
Red hands rent up the roots of old-world trees,
Thick flames of torches tossed as tumbling seas
Made mad the moonless and infuriate air
That, ravening, revelled in the riotous hair
And raiment of the furred Bassarides.

So came all those in on him; and his heart,
As out of sleep suddenly struck astart,
Danced, and his flesh took fire of theirs, and grief
Was as a last year's leaf
Blown dead far down the wind's way; and he set
His pale mouth to the brightest mouth it met
That laughed for love against his lips, and bade
Follow; and in following all his blood grew glad
And as again a sea-bird's; for the wind
Took him to bathe him deep round breast and brow
Not as it takes a dead leaf drained and thinned,
But as the brightest bay-flower blown on bough,
Set springing toward it singing: and they rode
By many a vine-leaved, many a rose-hung road,

Exalt with exultation: many a night
Set all its stars upon them as for spies
On many a moon-bewildering mountain-height
Where he rode only by the fierier light
Of his dread lady's hot sweet hungering eyes.
For the moon wandered witless of her way,
Spell-stricken by strong magic in such wise
As wizards use to set the stars astray.
And in his ears the music that makes mad
Beat always; and what way the music bade,
That alway rode he; nor was any sleep
His, nor from height nor deep.
But heaven was as red iron, slumberless,
And had no heart to bless;
And earth lay sere and darkling as distraught,
And help in her was nought.

Then many a midnight, many a morn and even,
His mother, passing forth of her fair heaven,
With goodlier gifts than all save gods can give
From earth or from the heaven where sea-things live,
With shine of sea-flowers through the bay-leaf braid
Woven for a crown her foam-white hands had made
To crown him with land's laurel and sea-dew,
Sought the sea-bird that was her boy: but he
Sat panther-throned beside Erigone,
Riding the red ways of the revel through
Midmost of pale-mouthed passion's crownless crew.
Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year
He let the vine-bit on the panther's lip
Slide, and the green rein slip,
And set his eyes to seaward, nor gave ear
If sound from landward hailed him, dire or dear;
And passing forth of all those fair fierce ranks
Back to the grey sea-banks,
Against a sea-rock lying, aslant the steep,
Fell after many sleepless dreams on sleep.

And in his sleep the dun green light was shed
Heavily round his head
That through the veil of sea falls fathom-deep,
Blurred like a lamp's that when the night drops dead
Dies; and his eyes gat grace of sleep to see
The deep divine dark dayshine of the sea,
Dense water-walls and clear dusk water-ways,
Broad-based, or branching as a sea-flower sprays
That side or this dividing; and anew
The glory of all her glories that he knew.
And in sharp rapture of recovering tears
He woke on fire with yearnings of old years,
Pure as one purged of pain that passion bore,
Ill child of bitter mother; for his own
Looked laughing toward him from her midsea throne,
Up toward him there ashore.

Thence in his heart the great same joy began,
Of child that made him man:
And turned again from all hearts else on quest,
He communed with his own heart, and had rest.
And like sea-winds upon loud waters ran
His days and dreams together, till the joy
Burned in him of the boy.
Till the earth's great comfort and the sweet sea's breath
Breathed and blew life in where was heartless death,
Death spirit-stricken of soul-sick days, where strife
Of thought and flesh made mock of death and life.
And grace returned upon him of his birth
Where heaven was mixed with heavenlike sea and earth;
And song shot forth strong wings that took the sun
From inward, fledged with might of sorrow and mirth
And father's fire made mortal in his son.
Nor was not spirit of strength in blast and breeze
To exalt again the sun's child and the sea's;
For as wild mares in Thessaly grow great
With child of ravishing winds, that violate
Their leaping length of limb with manes like fire

And eyes outburning heaven's
With fires more violent than the lightning levin's
And breath drained out and desperate of desire,
Even so the spirit in him, when winds grew strong,
Grew great with child of song.
Nor less than when his veins first leapt for joy
To draw delight in such as burns a boy,
Now too the soul of all his senses felt
The passionate pride of deep sea-pulses dealt
Through nerve and jubilant vein
As from the love and largess of old time,
And with his heart again
The tidal throb of all the tides keep rhyme
And charm him from his own soul's separate sense
With infinite and invasive influence
That made strength sweet in him and sweetness strong,
Being now no more a singer, but a song.

Till one clear day when brighter sea-wind blew
And louder sea-shine lightened, for the waves
Were full of godhead and the light that saves,
His father's, and their spirit had pierced him through,
He felt strange breath and light all round him shed
That bowed him down with rapture; and he knew
His father's hand, hallowing his humbled head,
And the old great voice of the old good time, that said:

“Child of my sunlight and the sea, from birth
A fosterling and fugitive on earth;
Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,
A manchild with an ungrown God's desire;
Because thou hast loved nought mortal more than me,
Thy father, and thy mother-hearted sea;
Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold
Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;
Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth
To feed men's hearts with visions, truer than truth;
Because thou hast kept in those world-wandering eyes

The light that makes me music of the skies;
 Because thou hast heard with world-unwearied ears
 The music that puts light into the spheres;
 Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth
 The sound of song that mingles north and south,
 The song of all the winds that sing of me,
 And in thy soul the sense of all the sea."

1880.

GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS FROM ARISTOPHANES

(Attempted in English Verse After the Original Metre)

THE BIRDS

(685-723)

COME on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and like to
 the leaves' generations,
 That are little of might, that are moulded of mire, unenduring
 and shadowlike nations,
 Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as visions of
 creatures fast fleeing,
 Lift up your mind unto us that are deathless, and dateless the
 date of our being:
 Us, children of heaven, us, ageless for aye, us, all of whose
 thoughts are eternal;
 That ye may from henceforth, having heard of us all things
 aright as to matters supernal,
 Of the being of birds and beginning of gods, and of streams,
 and the dark beyond reaching,
 Truthfully knowing aright, in my name bid Prodicus pack
 with his preaching.

It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the blackness of
 darkness, and hell's broad border,
 Earth was not, nor air, neither heaven; when in depths of the
 womb of the dark without order

First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was a wind-egg hatched in her bosom,
Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet Love burst out as a blossom,
Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirlwinds gustily turning.
He, after his wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are of darkness, in hell broad-burning,
For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and upraised us to light new-lighted.
And before this was not the race of the gods, until all things by Love were united;
And of kind united with kind in communion of nature the sky and the sea are
Brought forth, and the earth, and the race of the gods everlasting and blest. So that we are
Far away the most ancient of all things blest. And that we are of Love's generation
There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings, and with us have the Loves habitation;
And manifold fair young folk that forswore love once, ere the bloom of them ended,
Have the men that pursued and desired them subdued, by the help of us only befriended,
With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or a cock's comb staring and splendid.

All best good things that befall men come from us birds, as is plain to all reason:
For first we proclaim and make known to them spring, and the winter and autumn in season;
Bid sow, when the crane starts clanging for Afric, in shrill-voiced emigrant number,
And calls to the pilot to hang up his rudder again for the season, and slumber;
And then weave cloak for Orestes the thief, lest he strip men of theirs if it freezes.

And again thereafter the kite reappearing announces a change
in the breezes,
And that here is the season for shearing your sheep of their
spring wool. Then does the swallow
Give you notice to sell your greatcoat, and provide something
light for the heat that's to follow.
Thus are we as Ammon or Delphi unto you, Dodona, nay,
Phœbus Apollo.
For, as first ye come all to get auguries of birds, even such is in
all things your carriage,
Be the matter a matter of trade, or of earning your bread, or of
any one's marriage.
And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that belong to
discerning prediction:
Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon: you sneeze, and the
sign's as a bird for conviction:
All tokens are "birds" with you—sounds too, and lackeys, and
donkeys. Then must it not follow
That we ARE to you all as the manifest godhead that speaks in
prophetic Apollo?

1880.

EVENING ON THE BROADS

OVER two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the sterile
Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the
night.
Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the breathless
Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.
Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends on the
deathless
Waters: hardly the light lives on the face of the deep—
Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft shallow
Hover the colours and clouds of the twilight, void of a star.
As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose winglets
are callow

Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her brood
from afar,
Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies with
their blossom
Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is en-
cumbered with flowers.
World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth of her
bosom,
Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as ours.
Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dissembles
Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed by
dismay—
Nay, not so; but with love and delight beyond passion it
trembles,
Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of the day:
Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and begotten
Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of the grave:
Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not wholly for-
gotten,
Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck by the
wave.
Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon, in a vision
Blindly beheld, but in vain: ghosts that are tired, and
would rest.
But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense for
division,
Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves in a nest.
Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season enkindled
Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair with the
love of them fade:
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and dwindled,
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the night new-
made.
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasurable,
endless,
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless love of the
friendless

Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of the sun
depart.

Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters upholden

Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly for ever asway—

Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the golden

Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.

Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope to the
gleaming

Waste of the water without, waste of the water within,
Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubtfully
dreaming

Whether the day be done, whether the night may begin.

Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,

Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale on the
cloud:

Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover

Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the skirt of the
shroud.

Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light in the
westward

Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star upon star
Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to the breast-
ward

Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the ways of them
are,

Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the wealth of its
wonder,

Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan face of the
earth.

Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in them.
under

Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of a sure
new birth.

But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on the sea-
line, stranger

Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge gazed on of me,
Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void though of
danger

Void not of menace, but full of the might of the dense dull
sea.

Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank deep-drifted;
Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me in front is the
wave.

As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the girth of it
lifted:

But the rampire of water in front is erect as the wall of a
grave.

And the crests of it crumble and topple and change, but the
wall is not broken:

Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,
Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token

Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.

And even in the pauses between them, dividing the rollers in
sunder,

High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a mark,
And the shore where I stand as a valley beholden of hills
whence thunder

Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths of the
dark.

Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from under
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here from the
shore:

A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide sky's wonder

Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a slanted floor.
And the large lights change on the face of the mere like things
that were living,

Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are that pass and
are free:

But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in the
giving,

That lies as dead on the fierce dull face of the landward sea.
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthier than earth is and
duller,

Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put away:
No transparent rapture, a molten music of colour;

No translucent love taken and given of the day.

Fettered and marred and begrimed is the light's live self on
her falling,

As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a dungeon
mars:

Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives ear to him
calling;

The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers the sun
or the stars.

Love she hath none to return for the luminous love of their
giving:

None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response of her
heart.

Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead and not
living,

Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble that will
not depart.

In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan of her
evil remorse is,

Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed sea-
bank's fang

And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her foam-
lipped horses

Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns of pesti-
lence hang,

That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a death-stricken
city;

So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers knotted
with sand,

Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength without
pity,

That shake with flameless thunder the low long length of
the strand.

Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it lengthens
Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village begin,

On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of the strong
sea strengthens

Shoreward, thrusting further and further its outworks in,
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin forsaken,

Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's edge,
Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-shaken,
Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of the sun on the
sedge.

Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes in a dream he beheld her
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off king:

And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pastoral elder
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-blossom in
spring,

And kind as harvest in autumn: a shelter of shade on the
lonely

Shelterless unknown shore scourged of implacable waves:
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his kingdom, and
only

Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that conquers and
craves.

All these waters and wastes are his empire of old, and awaken
From barren and stagnant slumber at only the sound of his
breath:

Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart, nor the
goal overtaken

That his wide wings yearn for and labour as hearts that
yearn after death.

All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind expectation
Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown heartsick of
strife:

Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans, and the
vast ululation

Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and wails to be
quit of its life.

For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and his wings
with their waving

Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it thickened
or thinned;

But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's
insatiably craving

That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate the want
of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might, and
 oppose not
 Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or precipice
 piled:
 But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires what
 he knows not,
 And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one making moan
 for her child.
 And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of hunger that
 maddens
 The heart of a strong man aching in vain as the wind's heart
 aches
 And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite solitude
 saddens
 More for the sound than the silence athirst for the sound
 that slakes.
 And the sunset at last and the twilight are dead: and the
 darkness is breathless
 With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems and seems
 not to sleep:
 But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit unsleeping and
 deathless,
 Ghost or God, evermore moves on the face of the deep.
1880.

BY THE NORTH SEA

I

I

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin;
 A sea that is stranger than death:
 Far fields that a rose never blew in,
 Wan waste where the winds lack breath;
 Waste endless and boundless and flowerless
 But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free:
 Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless
 To strive with the sea.

2

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows
More pale than the clouds as they pass:
Thick woven as the weft of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches
Are waifs on the wind.

3

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,
No pasture or shelter for herds:
The wind is relentless and sleepless,
And restless and songless the birds;
Their cries from afar fall breathless,
Their wings are as lightnings that flee;
For the land has two lords that are deathless:
Death's self, and the sea.

4

These twain, as a king with his fellow,
Hold converse of desolate speech:
And her waters are haggard and yellow
And crass with the scurf of the beach:
And his garments are grey as the hoary
Wan sky where the day lies dim;
And his power is to her, and his glory,
As hers unto him.

5

In the pride of his power she rejoices,
In her glory he glows and is glad:
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,
With his breath she dilates and is mad:
"If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee."
"Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,
O sister, O sea?"

6

And year upon year dawns living,
And age upon age drops dead:
And his hand is not weary of giving,
And the thirst of her heart is not fed:
And the hunger that moans in her passion,
And the rage in her hunger that roars,
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,
Still calls and implores.

7

Her walls have no granite for girder,
No fortalice fronting her stands:
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder
Are less than the banks of her sands:
These number their slain by the thousand;
For the ship hath no surety to be,
When the bank is abreast of her bows and
Aflush with the sea.

8

No surety to stand, and no shelter
To dawn out of darkness but one,
Out of waters that hurtle and welter
No succour to dawn with the sun,
But a rest from the wind as it passes,
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses
The dead in their graves.

9

A multitude noteless of numbers,
As wild weeds cast on an heap:
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,
And softer than song is their sleep;
And sweeter than all things and stranger
The sense, if perchance it may be,
That the wind is divested of danger
And scatheless the sea.

10

That the roar of the banks they breasted
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,
And the strength of his wings that invested
The wind, as the strength of a bird's;
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's
That cry to him back if he cries,
As over the graves and their hollows
Days darken and rise.

11

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
And clean of the sins that they sinned,
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned
And delight as a wave's in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillow
As wrecks have the sea.

12

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,
Wings flash through the dusk like beams;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
The bird in the graveyard gleams;
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

13

As the waves of the numberless waters
That the wind cannot number who guides
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters
Here lulled by the chime of the tides:
And here in the press of them standing
We know not if these or if we
Live truliest, or anchored to landing
Or drifted to sea.

14

In the valley he named of decision
No denser were multitudes met
When the soul of the seer in her vision
Saw nations for doom of them set;
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour
Of judgment, the sword and the rod;
But the doom here of death is more tender
And gentler the god.

15

And gentler the wind from the dreary
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped;
And sweeter than all that we call so
The seal of their slumber shall be
Till the graves that embosom them also
Be sapped of the sea.

VI

I

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath;
These, above the washing tides and wasting,
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

2

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,
Very death of very death, begun
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unhidden,
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

3

Change of change, and death of death begotten,
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

4

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,
Formless form, incarnate miscreation,
Served of all things living and abhorred;
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,
Time, of all things born on earth adored.

5

All that worship thee are fearful of thee;
No man may not worship thee for fear:
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer:
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here.

6

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,
Here the palace paven for thy feet;
Here thy sign from nation unto nation
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,
Guards that go before thine exaltation,
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

7

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

8

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

9

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.
"Where is man?" the cloister murmurs wailing;
Back the mute shrine thunders—"Where is God?"

10

Here is all the end of all his glory—
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story:
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

11

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

12

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited
Long the archangel's re-creating word,
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated
Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

13

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,
Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,
Desolate beyond man's desolation,
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

14

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

15

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth and man, and all their gods wax humble
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

VII

I

But afar on the headland exalted,
But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted
Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
For deathless and ageless is he;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
His sandal the sea.

2

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
And her green floor glitters with fire,
The sea has the sun for a harper,
The sun has the sea for a lyre.

The waves are a pavement of amber,
By the feet of the sea-winds trod
To receive in a god's presence chamber
Our father, the God.

3

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
Is master and God of the land:
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
That is shed from our lord's right hand.
O father of all of us ever,
All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never,
And earth, and the sea.

4

O Sun, whereof all is beholden,
Behold now the shadow of this death,
This place of the sepulchres, olden
And emptied and vain as a breath.
The bloom of the bountiful heather
Laughs broadly beyond in thy light
As dawn, with her glories to gather,
At darkness and night.

5

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten
And their honour be taken away
And the noise of their names forgotten,
Thou, Lord, art God of the day.
Thou art father and saviour and spirit,
O Sun, of the soul that is free
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit
Thine earth and thy sea.

6

The hills and the sands and the beaches,
The waters adrift and afar,
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,
How glad of thee all these are!

The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:
The delight of thy coming unclouded
Makes music of earth.

7

I, last least voice of her voices,
Give thanks that were mute in me long
To the soul in my soul that rejoices
For the song that is over my song.
Time gives what he gains for the giving
Or takes for his tribute of me;
My dreams to the wind everliving,
My song to the sea.

1880.

PRELUDE

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that has the living world for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,
And alway through new act and passion new
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
The body spiritual of fire and light
That is to worldly noon as noon to night;
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began;
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime;
Love, that is blood within the veins of time;
That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
And with the pulse and motion of his breath
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death,
The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live

Through day and night of things alternative,
Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
And ebb and flow of dying death and life;
Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,
Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,
That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings;
Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things;
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down;
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike dead;
Love, that if once his own hands make his grave
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save;
Love, that for very life shall not be sold,
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold;
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell;
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven;
Love that is fire within thee and light above,
And lives by grace of nothing but of love;
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire;
Through many and lovely days and much delight
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

Yea, but what then? albeit all this were thus,
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous,
And love led love as eyeless men lead men,
Through chance by chance to deathward—Ah, what then?
Hath love not likewise led them further yet,
Out through the years where memories rise and set,
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,
Each with the blush of its own special bloom
On the fair face of its own coloured light,
Distinguishable in all the host of night,

Divisible from all the radiant rest
And separable in splendour? Hath the best
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love
Made for all these their sweet particular air
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
Their musical soft memories, and kept red
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek
That trembles with the kindling pity lit
In gracious hearts for some sweet fever-fit,
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought
By tales that make their honey out of nought,
The faithless faith that lives without belief
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature
And ravin of the dry discolouring hours,
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,
And the sweet shining signs of women's names
That mark the months out and the weeks anew
He moves in changeless change of seasons through
To fill the days up of his dateless year
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?
For first of all the sphery signs whereby
Love severs light from darkness, and most high,
In the white front of January there glows
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose:

And gold-eyed as the shore-flower shelterless
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,
A storm-star that the seafarers of love
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp
The lamplike star of Hero for a lamp;
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes;
And in clear March across the rough blue sea
The signal sapphire of Alcyone
Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year;
And shining like a sunbeam-smitten tear
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight
Burns opal-wise with April-coloured light
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,
My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower;
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond.
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond
Signs the sweet head of Maytime; and for June
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire;
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth-stone,
A star south-risen that first to music shone,
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears
Her name for flower upon it, and his trees
Mix their deep English song with Veronese;
And like an awful sovereign chrysolite
Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night,
The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,
A sun-flower among small sphered flowers of stars,
The light of Cleopatra fills and burns
The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns;
And fixed and shining as the sister-shed
Sweet tears for Phæthon disorbed and dead,

The pale bright autumn's amber-coloured sphere,
 That through September sees the saddening year
 As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name
 Francesca's; and the star that watches flame
 The embers of the harvest overgone
 Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,
 Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs
 A blood-bright ruby; last save one light shines
 An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,
 The star that made men mad, Angelica's;
 And latest named and lordliest, with a sound
 Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,
 Last love-light and last love-song of the year's
 Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenever's.
 These are the signs wherethrough the year sees move,
 Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,
 A fiery body blood-red from the heart
 Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,
 That close not and uncloze not, but upright
 Steered without wind by their own light and might
 Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings
 From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and wings
 And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme
 Through spaces out of space and timeless time.

So shine above dead chance and conquered change
 The spherèd signs, and leave without their range
 Doubt and desire, and hope with fear for wife,
 Pale pains, and pleasures long worn out of life.
 Yea, even the shadows of them spiritless,
 Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,
 Forms without form, a piteous people and blind,
 Men and no men, whose lamentable kind
 The shadow of death and shadow of life compel
 Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell,
 Through dreams of light and dreams of darkness tost
 On waves innavigable, are these so lost?
 Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,
 Void faces with unspeculative eyes,

Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that move,
Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,
Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,
Leavings of life, the superflux of death—
If these things and no more than these things be
Left when man ends or changes, who can see?
Or who can say with what more subtle sense
Their subtler natures taste in air less dense
A life less thick and palpable than ours,
Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead flowers
And measured by low music? how time fares
In that wan time-forgotten world of theirs,
Their pale poor world too deep for sun or star
To live in, where the eyes of Helen are,
And hers who made as God's own eyes to shine
The eyes that met them of the Florentine,
Wherein the godhead thence transfigured lit
All time for all men with the shadow of it?
Ah, and these too felt on them as God's grace
The pity and glory of this man's breathing face;
For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,
Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,
With lips that thundered and with feet that trod
Before men's eyes incognisable God;
Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire
Live with one life and at one mouth respire,
And in one golden sound their whole soul heard
Sounding, one sweet immitigable word.

They have the night, who had like us the day;
We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.
We, from the fetters of the light unbound,
Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.
All gifts but one the jealous God may keep
From our soul's longing, one he cannot—sleep.
This, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,
This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.
This, though his ear be sealed to all that live,
Be it lightly given or lothly, God must give.

We, as the men whose name on earth is none,
We too shall surely pass out of the sun;
Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,
Wide as the stretch of life's time-wandering wings,
Wide as the naked world and shadowless,
And long-lived as the world's own weariness.
Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,
The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.
Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,
The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,
But the large unbewildered eye of night
Hath sense and speculation; and the sheer
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,
These lives made out of loves that long since were,
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give
Out of my life to make their dead life live
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath
Between dead lips forgotten even of death?
So many and many of old have given my twain
Love and live song and honey-hearted pain,
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,
What should I do to follow? yet I too,
I have the heart to follow, many or few
Be the feet gone before me; for the way,
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day

Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,
Between the green and foam is fair to take
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me
From morning into morning, sea to sea.

1871.

1882.

ISEULT OF IRELAND

ABOUT the middle music of the spring
Came from the castled shore of Ireland's king
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound
And south by Wales and all its wonders round
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering stone
As flying sunward oversea, to bear
Green summer with it through the singing air.
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,
Sat with full face against the strengthening light
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.
Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,
And her face lovely past desire of love.
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.
The very veil of her bright flesh was made
As of light woven and moonbeam-coloured shade
More fine than moonbeams; white her eyelids shone
As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun,
And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep
Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep
Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's
The springs of unimaginable eyes.

As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through
With the utmost heaven's inextricable blue,
And both are woven and molten in one sleight
Of amorous colour and implicated light
Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,
So glowed their awless amorous plenilune,
Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange
With fiery difference and deep interchange
Inexplicable of glories multiform;
Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm
Foamless, their bitter beauty grew acold,
And now afire with ardour of fine gold.
Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,
For love upon them like a shadow sate
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings
That knew not what man's love or life should be,
Nor had it sight nor heart to hope or see
What thing should come, but childlike satisfied
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride
And unvisited expectation; and the glad
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.
Between the small round breasts a white way led
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head
The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon
Grew blossom-scented: her warm arms began
To round and ripen for delight of man
That they should clasp and circle: her fresh hands,
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went
A silent light as of a God content;
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,

Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,
 As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each
 Outshone the last that lightened, and not one
 Showed her such things as should be borne and done.
 Though hard against her shone the sunlike face
 That in all change and wreck of time and place
 Should be the star of her sweet living soul.

1877.

1882.

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

SELECTION

AND Tristram with the first pale windy light
 Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear
 Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,
 A noise of waking waters: for till dawn
 The sea was silent as a mountain lawn
 When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,
 And summer takes her fill ere autumn come
 Of life more soft than slumber: but ere day
 Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,
 Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took
 With its wide wings the waters as they shook,
 And hurled them huddling on ahead, and cast
 The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,
 Blown from the heart of morning: and with joy
 Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy
 That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
 For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
 Up sprang the might of Tristram; and his soul
 Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
 As a young child's with rapture of the hour
 That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,
 And all the bright blood in his veins beat time
 To the wind's clarion and the water's chime
 That called him and he followed it and stood
 On the sand's verge before the grey great flood
 Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met
 Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.

And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,
Home to his place with passion: and the heart
Trembled for joy within the man whose part
Was here not least in living; and his mind
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth
And with the light live water. So awhile
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night
And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour
And all the world about to break in flower
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun;
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,
As earth from her bright body casts off night,
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy;
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,
The flower of all men: scarce less bright than he,

If any of all men latter-born might stand,
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.
Not long: but with a cry of love that rang
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,
As toward a mother's where his head might rest
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
That none may gird nor measure: and his heart
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,
But triumphed in him silent: no man's voice,
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,
Can set that glory forth which fills with fire
The body and soul that have their whole desire
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide
To take the bright breast of the wave to his
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the daydawn of the world.
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,
Heart-stung with exultation of desire:
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,
As all the sea's life toward the sun: and still
Delight within him waxed with quickening will
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became
A note of rapture in the tune of life,
Live music mild and keen as sleep and strife:
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,

And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth:
 And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,
 But the life kindled of a fiery birth
 And passion of a new-begotten son
 Between the live sea and the living sun.
 And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
 Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
 The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
 Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
 Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
 To match the next with yet more strenuous sense;
 Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
 His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
 Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
 And back with light reluctant heart he bore
 Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore;
 Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,
 And donned his arms again, and felt the might
 In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised
 God for such life as that whereon he gazed,

1882.

DICKENS

CHIEF in thy generation born of men
 Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
 With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn
 For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
 When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
 Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
 Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
 Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen:
 Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
 Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,
 Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
 With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
 And Fielding's kindest might and Goldsmith's grace;
 Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

1882.

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART

I

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,
With hopes that rose and fell,
Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,
Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,
Have given you of my life,
Seeing your brave star burn high between
Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears
Long since fell still: so long
Hardly may hope to last in years
My song.

But still through strife of time and thought
Your light on me too fell:
Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,
Farewell.

II

There beats no heart on either border
Wherethrough the north blasts blow
But keeps your memory as a warder
His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder
Mine, for whose April age
Blithe midsummer made banquet under
The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather
Strength to ring true:
And air and trees and sun and heather
Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy
Or love or teen,
These they forgot, remembering Mary
The Queen.

III

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours
Whose sires brought forth for you
Their lives to strew your way like flowers,
Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name
Who died for you this long
Time past: shall this too fare the same,
My song?

But surely, though it die or live,
Your face was worth
All that a man may think to give
On earth.

No darkness cast of years between
Can darken you:
Man's love will never bid my queen
Adieu.

IV

Love hangs like light about your name
As music round the shell:
No heart can take of you a tame
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,
Ill gifts were yours for giving:
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,
The whole world's crowning jewel!
Was ever heart so deadly dear
So cruel?

Yet none for you of all that bled
Grudged once one drop that fell:
Not one to life reluctant said
Farewell.

v

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,
Who mock with praise your name,
To leave a head so rare and royal
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,
You had nor sense nor sting:
In God's name, then, what plague befell us
To fight for such a thing?

"Some faults the gods will give," to fether
Man's highest intent:
But surely you were something better
Than innocent!

No maid that strays with steps unwary
Through snares unseen,
But one to live and die for; Mary,
The Queen.

vi

Forgive them all their praise, who blot
Your fame with praise of you:
Then love may say, and falter not,
Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive
Who did you much less wrong
Once: but resentment should not live
Too long.

They never saw your lip's bright bow,
Your swordbright eyes,
The bluest of heavenly things below
The skies.

Clear eyes that love's self finds most like
 A swordblade's blue,
 A swordblade's ever keen to strike,
 Adieu.

VII

Though all things breathe or sound of fight
 That yet make up your spell,
 To bid you were to bid the light
 Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being
 A star whose race is run:
 Farewell the soul says never, seeing
 The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,
 The song must say but so
 That took your praise up twenty years
 Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,
 Sun kindling heaven and hell,
 Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,
 Farewell.

1882.

HERSE

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold
 A child some sweet months old,
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
 Smiling, with bated breath,
 Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
 And heaven's own heart how near!
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
 Gaze on this verier one?
 Heart, hold thy peace; eyes, be cast down for shame;
 Lips, breathe not yet its name.

In heaven they know what name to call it; we,
How should we know? For, see!
The adorable sweet living marvellous
Strange light that lightens us
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
Full in a babe's warm face!
All roses that the morning rears are nought,
All stars not worth a thought,
Set this one star against them, or suppose
As rival this one rose.
What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
One least flushed roseleaf's fold
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine
The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and colour that the sky
Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
Its mild miraculous eyes

Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
What may be said of men?
What speech may name a new-born child? what word
Earth ever spake or heard?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by.
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—
A better word than these,
A better sign it was than flower or gem
That love revealed to them:
They knew that whence comes light or quickening flame,
Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are
More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.
O child, what news from heaven?

1882.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

ALL the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
All sweet sounds together;

Sweeter far than all things heard,
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
 Welling water's winsome word,
 Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
 Hearing ere its chime be done
 Knows not well the sweetest one
 Heard of man beneath the sun,
 Hoped in heaven hereafter;
 Soft and strong and loud and light,
 Very sound of very light
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,
 When the soul of all delight
 Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled
 Never forth such notes, nor told
 Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
 As the radiant mouth of gold
 Here that rings forth heaven.
 If the golden-crested wren
 Were a nightingale—why, then,
 Something seen and heard of men
 Might be half as sweet as when
 Laughs a child of seven.

1882.

A CHILD'S FUTURE

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
 Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
 Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is stirred
 Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise are
 heard:
 Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound;
Love may forsake us; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardour of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a toy:
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives:
Death cannot slay her: she laughs upon death and forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star:
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their sea:
Fear not at all; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

1882.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

CROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,
Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star!
Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
Most far off in the abysm of time, thy lyre
Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
Where all ye sang together, all that are,
And all the starry songs behind thy car
Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.
“If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters’ thoughts,”
And as with rush of hurtling chariots
The flight of all their spirits were impelled
Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,
Not yet might’st thou be praised enough of men.

1882.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
 Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.
 Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea, the
 sea,
 What power is in them all to praise the sun?
 His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.
 Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he
 Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.
 He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.
 All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
 Are his: without him, day were night on earth.
 Time knows not his from time's own period.
 All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
 Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
 All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

1882.

BEN JONSON

BROAD-BASED, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
 With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
 Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
 And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
 The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
 Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
 Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
 From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,
 High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
 Hold converse: and the herd of meaner things
 Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
 When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed
 Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings,

1882.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

AN hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
Across them and between, a quickening fire,
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.
1882.

THE MANY

I

GREENE, garlanded with February's few flowers,
Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage:
Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age
Took the mild chaplet woven of honoured hours:
Nash, laughing hard: Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers:
And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage
Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring showers:
Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves:
And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse
Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse:
Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,
Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse:
Live likewise ye: Time takes not you for slaves.

1882.

CHILDREN

OF such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

1882.

CHILD AND POET

You send me your love in a letter,
I send you my love in a song:
Ah child, your gift is the better,
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,
No praise, were it wide as earth,
Is worth so much as a little
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us
As they might angels above:
Come back to us, child, if you love us,
And bring us your love.

1882.

ÉTUDE RÉALISTE

I

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled
Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands
When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world—
A baby's hands.

III

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes.

1883.

BABYHOOD

I

A BABY shines as bright
If winter or if May be
On eyes that keep in sight
A baby.

Though dark the skies or grey be,
It fills our eyes with light,
If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,
The sweetest thing that may be,
Yet cannot praise aright
A baby.

II

All heaven, in every baby born,
All absolute of earthly leaven,
Reveals itself, though man may scorn
All heaven.

Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,
All grief appeased, all pain outworn,
By this one revelation given.

Soul, now forget thy burdens borne:
Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven:
Love shows in light more bright than morn
All heaven.

III

What likeness may define, and stray not
From truth's exactest way,
A baby's beauty? Love can say not
What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May
Of all that shine and stay not
Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not
As yet with winds that play,
Would fain be matched with this, and may not:
What likeness may?

IV

ROSE, round whose bed
Dawn's cloudlets close,
Earth's brightest-bred
Rose!

No song, love knows,
May praise the head
Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,
The whole child glows
One sweet live red
Rose.

1883.

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

A LITTLE way, more soft and sweet
Than fields aflower with May,
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete
A little way.

Eyes full of dawning day
 Look up for mother's eyes to meet,
 Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet
 Its first live leaflet's play,
 Love, laughing, leads the little feet
 A little way.

1883.

THE ROUNDEL

A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
 With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
 That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear
 A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
 Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture or
 fear—
 That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
 Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
 So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
 A roundel is wrought.

1883.

BEFORE SUNSET

LOVE's twilight wanes in heaven above,
 On earth ere twilight reigns:
 Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,
 Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains
 "Too much, and scarce enough,"
 The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove
 Love's hands let slip the reins:
 And while we look for light of love
 Love's twilight wanes.

1883.

ON AN OLD ROUNDEL

AGES ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet
 Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,
 The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it
 Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,
 No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,
 Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,
 Known once of ears that never again shall know,
 Now mute as the mouth which felt death's wave o'erflow it
 Ages ago.

1883.

ENVOI

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,
 Frail pale wings for the winds to try,
 Small white wings that we scarce can see
 Fly.

Here and there may a chance-caught eye
 Note in a score of you twain or three
 Brighter or darker of tinge or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,
 Some fly soft as a low long sigh:
 All to the haven where each would be
 Fly.

1883.

ON A COUNTRY ROAD

ALONG these low pleached lanes, on such a day,
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,
With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild way,
And heart still hovering o'er a song begun,
And smile that warmed the world with benison,
Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,
Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime
Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.
Because thy passage once made warm this clime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,
She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun
Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array
For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun
Things past for dreams of better to be won,
Through many a century since thy funeral chime
Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime
To have spared not thee for very love or shame;
And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,
Meseems, might bring us face to face with one
Whom seeing we could not but give thanks, and pray
For England's love our father and her son
To speak with us as once in days long done
With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,
Who knew not as we know the soul sublime
That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.
Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,
Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime

Names once beloved; but, seeing the sun the same,
As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

1884.

THE SUNBOWS

SPRAY of song that springs in April, light of love that laughs
through May,
Live and die and live for ever: nought of all things far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like fire
away.
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter that they
were;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old was
there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids perpetual
memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts which
seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing
flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn to-day:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through
radiant air,
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind that works
in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight may
well nigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colours rain from heaven, though
this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined ray by
ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till eyes may
hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing
flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed from
 bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter headlands keen
 and bare
Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal memory
 watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance the mid-
 night spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight in her
 snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea, saith dawn, though
 night say nay:
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles everywhere
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing
 flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would yet the
 living fare.
All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward, who shall
 say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth a world of
 care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing
 flames of spray.

1884.

ON THE VERGE

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end. Where
 we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these waves
 that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye of man
 hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume of
 shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our
 bounds of dream.

Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas it
watches roll

Find their border fixed beyond them, and a worldwide shore's
control:

These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits: these are
free.

Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round the
Pole,

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that
plunge and scream.

Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies: and
scarce they seem

More than notes that thronged and trembled in the brief
noon's breath and beam.

Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like sound of
bells that toll,

Some with sighing and laughing, some with words that blessed
and made us whole,

Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were, nor
what were we.

Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of answering
whisper stole

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes and
brows be fanned

Round with airs of twilight, washed with dew from sleep's
eternal stream,

Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire consume
the brand,

Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry team,
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not: yea, the
scroll

Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of peace or
doom of dole.

Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the gloom
with venturous glee,

Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock nor
shoal,

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life have death
for goal?

Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor skies unroll

What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall alway be.

Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

1884.

INES ON THE MONUMENT OF GIUSEPPE MAZZINI

ITALIA, mother of the souls of men,

Mother divine,

Of all that served thee best with sword or pen,

All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best

Before thee stands;

The head most high, the heart found faithfulest,

The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,

The soul, we know,

Now sits on high where Alighieri sits

With Angelo.

Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech

Enough to say

What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,

No words can weigh.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son,
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this one.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast sealed eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise.

And all the world was bright with her through him:
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished: hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt, and are not: he is here,
The sunlike man.

City superb that hadst Columbus first
For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nurst
This mightier one.

Glory be his for ever, while his land
Lives and is free,
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
He bade her be.

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame,
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold
Mazzini's name.

THE COMMONWEAL

1887

I

EIGHT hundred years and twenty-one
Have shone and sunken since the land
Whose name is freedom bore such brand
As marks a captive, and the sun
Beheld her fettered hand.

II

But ere dark time had shed as rain
Or sown on sterile earth as seed
That bears no fruit save tare and weed
An age and half an age again,
She rose on Runnymede.

III

Out of the shadow, starlike still,
She rose up radiant in her right,
And spake, and put to fear and flight
The lawless rule of awless will
That pleads no right save might.

IV

Nor since hath England ever borne
The burden laid on subject lands,
The rule that curbs and binds all hands
Save one, and marks for servile scorn
The heads it bows and brands.

V

A commonweal arrayed and crowned
With gold and purple, girt with steel
At need, that foes must fear or feel,
We find her, as our fathers found,
Earth's lordliest commonweal.

VI

And now that fifty years are flown
Since in a maiden's hand the sign
Of empire that no seas confine
First as a star to seaward shone,
We see their record shine.

VII

A troubled record, foul and fair,
A simple record and serene,
Inscribes for praise a blameless queen,
For praise and blame an age of care
And change and ends unseen.

VIII

Hope, wide of eye and wild of wing,
Rose with the sundawn of a reign
Whose grace should make the rough ways plain,
And fill the worn old world with spring,
And heal its heart of pain.

IX

Peace was to be on earth; men's hope
Was holier than their fathers had,
Their wisdom not more wise than glad:
They saw the gates of promise ope,
And heard what love's lips bade.

X

Love armed with knowledge, winged and wise,
Should hush the wind of war, and see,
They said, the sun of days to be
Bring round beneath serener skies
A stormless jubilee.

XI

Time, in the darkness un beholden
That hides him from the sight of fear
And lets but dreaming hope draw near,
Smiled and was sad to hear such golden
Strains hail the all-golden year.

XII

Strange clouds have risen between, and wild
Red stars of storm that lit the abyss
Wherein fierce fraud and violence kiss
And mock such promise as beguiled
The fiftieth year from this.

XIII

War upon war, change after change,
Hath shaken thrones and towers to dust,
And hopes austere and faiths august
Have watched in patience stern and strange
Men's works unjust and just.

XIV

As from some Alpine watch-tower's portal
Night, living yet, looks forth for dawn,
So from time's mistier mountain lawn
The spirit of man, in trust immortal,
Yearns toward a hope withdrawn.

XV

The morning comes not, yet the night
Wanes, and men's eyes win strength to see
Where twilight is, where light shall be
When conquered wrong and conquering right
Acclaim a world set free.

XVI

Calm as our mother-land, the mother
Of faith and freedom, pure and wise,
Keeps watch beneath unchangeful skies,
When hath she watched the woes of other
Strange lands with alien eyes?

XVII

Calm as she stands alone, what nation
Hath lacked an alms from English hands?
What exiles from what stricken lands
Have lacked the shelter of the station
Where higher than all she stands?

XVIII

Though time discrown and change dismantle
The pride of thrones and towers that frown,
How should they bring her glories down—
The sea cast round her like a mantle,
The sea-cloud like a crown?

XIX

The sea, divine as heaven and deathless,
Is hers, and none but only she
Hath learnt the sea's word, none but we
Her children hear in heart the breathless
Bright watchword of the sea.

XX

Heard not of others, or misheard
Of many a land for many a year,
The watchword Freedom fails not here
Of hearts that witness if the word
Find faith in England's ear.

XXI

She, first to love the light, and daughter
Incarnate of the northern dawn,
She, round whose feet the wild waves fawn
When all their wrath of warring water
Sounds like a babe's breath drawn,

XXII

How should not she best know, love best,
And best of all souls understand
The very soul of freedom, scanned
Far off, sought out in darkling quest
By men at heart unmanned?

XXIII

They climb and fall, ensnared, enshrouded,
By mists of words and toils they set
To take themselves, till fierce regret
Grows mad with shame, and all their clouded
Red skies hang sunless yet.

XXIV

But us the sun, not wholly risen
Nor equal now for all, illumines
With more of light than cloud that looms;
Of light that leads forth souls from prison
And breaks the seals of tombs.

XXV

Did not her breasts who reared us rear
Him who took heaven in hand, and weighed
Bright world with world in balance laid?
What Newton's might could make not clear
Hath Darwin's might not made?

XXVI

The forces of the dark dissolve,
The doorways of the dark are broken:
The word that casts out night is spoken,
And whence the springs of things evolve
Light born of night bears token.

XXVII

She, loving light for light's sake only,
And truth for only truth's, and song
For song's sake and the sea's, how long
Hath she not borne the world her lonely
Witness of right and wrong?

XXVIII

From light to light her eyes imperial
Turn, and require the further light,
More perfect than the sun's in sight,
Till star and sun seem all funereal
Lamps of the vaulted night.

XXIX

She gazes till the strenuous soul
Within the rapture of her eyes
Creates or bids awake, arise,
The light she looks for, pure and whole
And worshipped of the wise.

XXX

Such sons are hers, such radiant hands
Have borne abroad her lamp of old,
Such mouths of honey-dropping gold
Have sent across all seas and lands
Her fame as music rolled.

XXXI

As music made of rolling thunder
That hurls through heaven its heart sublime,
Its heart of joy, in charging chime,
So ring the songs that round and under
Her temple surge and climb.

XXXII

A temple not by men's hands builded,
But moulded of the spirit, and wrought
Of passion and imperious thought;
With light beyond all sunlight gilded,
Whereby the sun seems nought.

XXXIII

Thy shrine, our mother, seen for fairer
Than even thy natural face, made fair
With kisses of thine April air
Even now, when spring thy banner-bearer
Took up thy sign to bear;

XXXIV

Thine annual sign from heaven's own arch
Given of the sun's hand into thine,
To rear and cheer each wildwood shrine
But now laid waste by wild-winged March,
March, mad with wind like wine.

XXXV

From all thy brightening downs whereon
The windy seaward whin-flower shows
Blossom whose pride strikes pale the rose
Forth is the golden watchword gone
Whereat the world's face glows.

XXXVI

Thy quickening woods rejoice and ring
Till earth seems glorious as the sea:
With yearning love too glad for glee
The world's heart quivers toward the spring
As all our hearts toward thee.

XXXVII

Thee, mother, thee, our queen, who givest
Assurance to the heavens most high
And earth whereon her bondsmen sigh
That by the sea's grace while thou livest
Hope shall not wholly die.

XXXVIII

That while thy free folk hold the van
Of all men, and the sea-spray shed
As dew more heavenly on thy head
Keeps bright thy face in sight of man,
Man's pride shall drop not dead.

XXXIX

A pride more pure than humblest prayer,
More wise than wisdom born of doubt,
Girds for thy sake men's hearts about
With thrust and triumph that despair
And fear may cast not out.

XL

Despair may ring men's hearts, and fear
Bow down their heads to kiss the dust,
Where patriot memories rot and rust,
And change makes faint a nation's cheer,
And faith yields up her trust.

XLI

Not here this year have true men known,
Not here this year may true men know,
That brand of shame-compelling woe
Which bids but brave men shrink or groan
And lays but honour low.

XLII

The strong spring wind blows notes of praise,
And hallowing pride of heart, and cheer
Unchanging, toward all true men here
Who hold the trust of ancient days
High as of old this year.

XLIII

The days that made thee great are dead;
The days that now must keep thee great
Lie not in keeping of thy fate;
In thine they lie, whose heart and head
Sustain thy charge of state.

XLIV

No state so proud, no pride so just,
The sun, through clouds at sunrise curled
Or clouds across the sunset whirled,
Hath sight of, nor has man such trust
As thine in all the world.

XLV

Each hour that sees the sunset's crest
Make bright thy shores ere day decline
Sees dawn the sun on shores of thine,
Sees west as east and east as west
On thee their sovereign shine.

XLVI

The sea's own heart must needs wax proud
To have borne the world a child like thee.
What birth of earth might ever be
Thy sister? Time, a wandering cloud,
Is sunshine on thy sea.

XLVII

Change mars not her; and thee, our mother,
What change that irks or moves thee mars?
What shock that shakes? what chance that jars?
Time gave thee, as he gave none other,
A station like a star's.

XLVIII

The storm that shrieks, the wind that wages
War with the wings of hopes that climb
Too high toward heaven in doubt sublime,
Assail not thee, approved of ages
The towering crown of time.

XLIX

Toward thee this year thy children turning
With souls uplift of changeless cheer
Salute with love that casts out fear,
With hearts for beacons round thee burning,
The token of this year.

L

With just and sacred jubilation
Let earth sound answer to the sea
For witness, blown on winds as free,
How England, how her crowning nation,
Acclaims this jubilee.

PAN AND THALASSIUS

A Lyrical Idyl

THALASSIUS

PAN!

PAN

O sea-stray, seed of Apollo,
What word wouldst thou have with me?
My ways thou wast fain to follow
Or ever the years hailed thee
Man.

Now

If August brood on the valleys,
If satyrs laugh on the lawns,
What part in the wildwood alleys
Hast thou with the fleet-foot fauns—
Thou?

See!

Thy feet are a man's—not cloven
Like these, not light as a boy's:
The tresses and tendrils inwoven
That lure us, the lure of them cloy
Thee.

Us

The joy of the wild woods never
Leaves free of the thirst it slakes:
The wild love throbs in us ever
That burns in the dense hot brakes
Thus.

Life,

Eternal, passionate, awless,
Insatiable, mutable, dear,
Makes all men's law for us lawless:
We strive not: how should we fear
Strife?

We,
The birds and the bright winds know not
Such joys as are ours in the mild
Warm woodland; joys such as grow not
In waste green fields of the wild
Sea.

No;
Long since, in the world's wind veering,
Thy heart was estranged from me:
Sweet Echo shall yield thee not hearing:
What have we to do with thee?
Go.

THALASSIUS

Ay!
Such wrath on thy nostril quivers
As once in Sicilian heat
Bade herdsmen quail, and the rivers
Shrank, leaving a path for thy feet
Dry?

Nay,
Low down in the hot soft hollow
Too snakelike hisses thy spleen:
"O sea-stray, seed of Apollo!"
What ill hast thou heard or seen?
Say.

Man
Knows well, if he hears beside him
The snarl of thy wrath at noon,
What evil may soon betide him,
Or late, if thou smite not soon,
Pan.

Me

The sound of thy flute, that flatters
The woods as they smile and sigh,
Charmed fast as it charms thy satyrs,
Can charm no faster than I
Thee.

Fast

Thy music may charm the splendid
Wide woodland silence to sleep
With sounds and dreams of thee blended
And whispers of waters that creep
Past.

Here

The spell of thee breathes and passes
And bids the heart in me pause,
Hushed soft as the leaves and the grasses
Are hushed if the storm's foot draws
Near.

Yet

The panic that strikes down strangers
Transgressing thy ways unaware
Affrights not me nor endangers
Through dread of thy secret snare
Set.

PAN

Whence

May man find heart to deride me?
Who made his face as a star
To shine as a God's beside me?
Nay, get thee away from us, far
Hence.

THALASSIUS

Then
Shall no man's heart, as he raises
A hymn to thy secret head,
Wax great with the godhead he praises:
Thou, God, shalt be like unto dead
Men.

PAN

Grace
I take not of men's thanksgiving,
I crave not of lips that live;
They die, and behold, I am living,
While they and their dead Gods give
Place.

THALASSIUS

Yea:
Too lightly the words were spoken
That mourned or mocked at thee dead:
But whose was the word, the token,
The song that answered and said
Nay?

PAN

Whose
But mine, in the midnight hidden,
Clothed round with the strength of night
And mysteries of things forbidden
For all but the one most bright
Muse?

THALASSIUS

Hers
Or thine, O Pan, was the token
That gave back empire to thee
When power in thy hands lay broken
As reeds that quake if a bee
Stirs?

PAN

Whom
Have I in my wide woods need of?
Urania's limitless eyes
Behold not mine end, though they read of
A word that shall speak to the skies
Doom.

THALASSIUS

She
Gave back to thee kingdom and glory,
And grace that was thine of yore,
And life to thy leaves, late hoary
As weeds cast up from the hoar
Sea.

Song
Can bid faith shine as the morning
Though light in the world be none:
Death shrinks if her tongue sound warning,
Night quails, and beholds the sun
Strong.

PAN

Night
Bare rule over men for ages
Whose worship wist not of me
And gat but sorrows for wages,
And hardly for tears could see
Light.

Call
No more on the starry presence
Whose light through the long dark swam:
Hold fast to the green world's pleasure:
For I that am lord of it am
All.

THALASSIUS

God,
God Pan, from the glad wood's portal
The breaths of thy song blow sweet:
But woods may be walked in of mortal
Man's thought, where never thy feet
Trode.

Thine
All secrets of growth and of birth are,
All glories of flower and of tree,
Wheresoever the wonders of earth are;
The words of the spell of the sea
Mine.

1889.

IN TIME OF MOURNING

"RETURN," we dare not as we fain
Would cry from hearts that yearn:
Love dares not bid our dead again
Return.

O hearts that strain and burn
As fires fast fettered burn and strain!
Bow down, lie still, and learn.

The heart that healed all hearts of pain
No funeral rites inurn:
Its echoes, while the stars remain,
Return.

May, 1885.

1887.

1889.

THE INTERPRETERS

I

DAYS dawn on us that make amends for many
Sometimes,
When heaven and earth seem sweeter even than any
Man's rhymes.

Light had not all been quenched in France, or quelled
In Greece,
Had Homer sung not, or had Hugo held
His peace.

Had Sappho's self not left her word thus long
For token,
The sea round Lesbos yet in waves of song
Had spoken.

II

And yet these days of subtler air and finer
Delight,
When lovelier looks the darkness, and diviner
The light—

The gift they give of all these golden hours,
Whose urn
Pours forth reverberate rays or shadowing showers
In turn—

Clouds, beams, and winds that make the live day's track
Seem living—
What were they did no spirit give them back
Thanksgiving?

III

Dead air, dead fire, dead shapes and shadows, telling
Time nought;
Man gives them sense and soul by song, and dwelling
In thought.

In human thought their being endures, their power
Abides:
Else were their life a thing that each light hour
Derides.

The years live, work, sigh, smile, and die, with all
They cherish;
The soul endures, though dreams that fed it fall
And perish.

IV

In human thought have all things habitation;
Our days
Laugh, lower, and lighten past, and find no station
That stays.

But thought and faith are mightier things than time
Can wrong,
Made splendid once with speech, or made sublime
By song.

Remembrance, though the tide of change that rolls
Wax hoary,
Gives earth and heaven, for song's sake and the soul's,
Their glory.

July 16th, 1885
1885.

1889.

THE WINDS

O WEARY fa' the east wind,
And weary fa' the west:
And gin I were under the wan waves wide
I wot weel wad I rest.

O weary fa' the north wind,
And weary fa' the south:
The sea went ower my good lord's head
Or ever he kissed my mouth.

Weary fa' the windward rocks,
 And weary fa' the lee:
 They might hae sunken sevenscore ships,
 And let my love's gang free.

And weary fa' ye, mariners a',
 And weary fa' the sea:
 It might hae taken an hundred men,
 And let my ae love be.

1877.

1889.

A LYKE-WAKE SONG

FAIR of face, full of pride,
 Sit ye down by a dead man's side.

Ye sang songs a' the day:
 Sit down at night in the red worm's way.

Proud ye were a' day long:
 Ye'll be but lean at evensong.

Ye had gowd kells on your hair:
 Nae man kens what ye were.

Ye set scorn by the silken stuff:
 Now the grave is clean enough.

Ye set scorn by the rubis ring:
 Now the worm is a saft sweet thing.

Fine gold and blithe fair face,
 Ye are come to a grimly place.

Gold hair and glad grey een,
 Nae man kens if ye have been.

1877.

1889.

A JACOBITE'S FAREWELL

1716

THERE's nae mair lands to tyne, my dear,
And nae mair lives to gie:
Though a man think sair to live nae mair,
There's but one day to die.

For a' things come and a' days gane,
What needs ye rend your hair?
But kiss me till the morn's morrow,
Then I'll kiss ye nae mair.

O lands are lost and life's losing,
And what were they to gie?
Fu' mony a man gives all he can,
But nae man else gives ye.

Our king wons ower the sea's water,
And I in prison sair:
But I'll win out the morn's morrow,
And ye'll see me nae mair.

1877.

1889.

THE TYNESIDE WIDOW

THERE's mony a man loves land and life,
Loves life and land and fee;
And mony a man loves fair women,
But never a man loves me, my love,
But never a man loves me.

O weel and weel for a' lovers,
I wot weel may they be;
And weel and weel for a' fair maidens,
But aye mair woe for me, my love,
But aye mair woe for me.

O weel be wi' you, ye sma' flowers,
Ye flowers and every tree;
And weel be wi' you, a' birdies,
But teen and tears wi' me, my love,
But teen and tears wi' me.

O weel be yours, my three brethren,
And ever weel be ye;
Wi' deeds for doing and loves for wooing,
But never a love for me, my love,
But never a love for me.

And weel be yours, my seven sisters,
And good love-days to see,
And long life-days and true lovers,
But never a day for me, my love,
But never a day for me.

Good times wi' you, ye bauld riders,
By the hieland and the lee;
And by the leeland and by the hieland
It's weary times wi' me, my love,
It's weary times wi' me.

Good days wi' you, ye good sailors,
Sail in and out the sea;
And by the beaches and by the reaches
It's heavy days wi' me, my love,
It's heavy days wi' me.

I had his kiss upon my mouth,
His bairn upon my knee;
I would my soul and body were twain,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me, my love,
And the bairn and the kiss wi' me.

The bairn down in the mools, my dear,
O saft and saft lies she;
I would the mools were ower my head,
And the young bairn fast wi' me, my love,
And the young bairn fast wi' me.

The father under the faem, my dear,
O sound and sound sleeps he;
I would the faem were ower my face,
And the father lay by me, my love,
And the father lay by me.

I would the faem were ower my face,
Or the mools on my ee-bree;
And waking-time with a' lovers,
But sleeping-time wi' me, my love,
But sleeping-time wi' me.

I would the mools were meat in my mouth,
The saut faem in my ee;
And the land-worm and the water-worm
To feed fu' sweet on me, my love,
To feed fu' sweet on me.

My life is sealed with a seal of love,
And locked with love for a key;
And I lie wrang and I wake lang,
But ye tak' nae thought for me, my love,
But ye tak' nae thought for me.

We were weel fain of love, my dear,
O fain and fain were we;
It was weel with a' the weary world,
But O, sae weel wi' me, my love,
But O, sae weel wi' me.

We were nane ower mony to sleep, my dear,
I wot we were but three;
And never a bed in the weary world
For my bairn and my dear and me, my love,
For my bairn and my dear and me.

A NYMPHOLEPT

SUMMER, and noon, and a splendour of silence, felt,
Seen, and heard of the spirit within the sense.
Soft through the frondage the shades of the sunbeams melt,
Sharp through the foliage the shafts of them, keen and
dense,
Cleave, as discharged from the string of the God's bow,
tense
As a war-steed's girth, and bright as a warrior's belt.
Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour pass
hence?

I dare not sleep for delight of the perfect hour,
Lest God be wroth that his gift should be scorned of man.
The face of the warm bright world is the face of a flower,
The word of the wind and the leaves that the light winds
fan
As the word that quickened at first into flame, and ran,
Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive power,
Through darkness and cloud, from the breath of the one
God, Pan.

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun pervades
The chaster air that he soothes but with sense of sleep.
Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails and fades,
The passing noon that beholds not a cloudlet weep
Imbues and impregnates life with delight more deep
Than dawn or sunset or moonrise on lawns or glades
Can shed from the skies that receive it and may not keep.

The skies may hold not the splendour of sundown fast;
It wanes into twilight as dawn dies down into day.
And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately sway.
But the might of the noon, though the light of it pass away,
Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that last;
But if any there be that hath sense of them none can say.

For if any there be that hath sight of them, sense, or trust
Made strong by the might of a vision, the strength of a
dream,

His lips shall straiten and close as a dead man's must,
His heart shall be sealed as the voice of a frost-bound stream.
For the deep mid mystery of light and of heat that seem
To clasp and pierce dark earth, and enkindle dust,
Shall a man's faith say what it is? or a man's guess deem?

Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all night
Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and trees.

Why now should the haze not open, and yield to sight
A fairer secret than hope or than slumber sees?

I seek not heaven with submission of lips and knees,
With worship and prayer for a sign till it leap to light:
I gaze on the gods about me, and call on these.

I call on the gods hard by, the divine dim powers
Whose likeness is here at hand, in the breathless air,
In the pulseless peace of the fervid and silent flowers,
In the faint sweet speech of the waters that whisper there.
Ah, what should darkness do in a world so fair?

The bent-grass heaves not, the couch-grass quails not or cowers;
The wind's kiss frets not the rowan's or aspen's hair.

But the silence trembles with passion of sound suppressed,
And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sunward, wrung
With love as with pain; and the wide wood's motionless breast
Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find tongue
And palpitates, tongueless as she whom a man-snake stung,
Whose heart now heaves in the nightingale, never at rest
Nor satiated ever with song till her last be sung.

Is it rapture or terror that circles me round, and invades
Each vein of my life with hope—if it be not fear?

Each pulse that awakens my blood into rapture fades,
Each pulse that subsides into dread of a strange thing near
Requickness with sense of a terror less dread than dear.

Is peace not one with light in the deep green glades
Where summer at noonday slumbers? Is peace not here?

The tall thin stems of the firs, and the roof sublime
That screens from the sun the floor of the steep still wood,
Deep, silent, splendid, and perfect and calm as time,
Stand fast as ever in sight of the night they stood,
When night gave all that moonlight and dewfall could.
The dense ferns deepen, the moss glows warm as the thyme:
The wild heath quivers about me: the world is good.

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maidenhair,
That bids fear creep as a snake through the woodlands, felt
In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,
In the stress of the sun? For here has the great God dwelt:
For hence were the shafts of his love or his anger dealt.
For here has his wrath been fierce as his love was fair,
When each was as fire to the darkness its breath bade melt.

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling noon,
That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,
As man for woman, as woman for man? Full soon,
If I live, and the life that may look on him drop not dead,
Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his tread,
The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's tune
Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,
The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might,
Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,
Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light,
With harsher awe than breathes in the breath of night.
Have mercy, God who art all! For I know thee well,
How sharp is thine eye to lighten, thine hand to smite.

The whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee: but fear
So deep, so dim, so sacred, is wellnigh sweet.
For the light that hangs and broods on the woodlands here,
Intense, invasive, intolerant, imperious, and meet
To lighten the works of thine hands and the ways of thy feet,
Is hot with the fire of the breath of thy life, and dear
As hope that shrivels or shrinks not for frost or heat.

Thee, thee the supreme dim godhead, approved afar,
Perceived of the soul and conceived of the sense of man,
We scarce dare love, and we dare not fear: the star
We call the sun, that lit us when life began
To brood on the world that is thine by his grace for a
span,
Conceals and reveals in the semblance of things that are
Thine immanent presence, the pulse of thy heart's life, Pan.

The fierce mid noon that wakens and warms the snake
Conceals thy mercy, reveals thy wrath: and again
The dew-bright hour that assuages the twilight brake
Conceals thy wrath and reveals thy mercy: then
Thou art fearful only for evil souls of men
That feel with nightfall the serpent within them wake,
And hate the holy darkness on glade and glen.

Yea, then we know not and dream not if ill things be,
Or if aught of the work of the wrong of the world be thine. —
We hear not the footfall of terror that treads the sea,
We hear not the moan of winds that assail the pine:
We see not if shipwreck reign in the storm's dim shrine;
If death do service and doom bear witness to thee
We see not,—know not if blood for thy lips be wine.

But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan,
As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,
We know thee present and latent, the lord of man;
In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of winds
that call
And wolves that howl for their prey; in the midnight's pall,
In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, O Pan,
And in each life living, O thou the God who art all.

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,
Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping, still
Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands
Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's wild will

That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-wind's mill.

In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that stands:
The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfil.

Where Etna shudders with passion and pain volcanic
That rend her heart as with anguish that rends a man's,
Where Typho labours, and finds not his thews Titanic,
In breathless torment that ever the flame's breath fans,
Men felt and feared thee of old, whose pastoral clans
Were given to the charge of thy keeping; and soundless panic
Held fast the woodland whose depths and whose heights
were Pan's.

And here, though fear be less than delight, and awe
Be one with desire and with worship of earth and thee,
So mild seems now thy secret and speechless law,
So fair and fearless and faithful and godlike she,
So soft the spell of thy whisper on stream and sea,
Yet man should fear lest he see what of old men saw
And withered: yet shall I quail if thy breath smite me.

Lord God of life and of light and of all things fair,
Lord God of ravin and ruin and all things dim,
Death seals up life, and darkness the sunbright air,
And the stars that watch blind earth in the deep night swim
Laugh, saying, "What God is your God, that ye call on him?
What is man, that the God who is guide of our way should
care
If day for a man be golden, or night be grim?"

But thou, dost thou hear? Stars too but abide for a span,
Gods too but endure for a season; but thou, if thou be
God, more than shadows conceived and adored of man,
Kind Gods and fierce, that bound him or made him free,
The skies that scorn us are less in thy sight than we,
Whose souls have strength to conceive and perceive thee, Pan,
With sense more subtle than senses that hear and see.

Yet may not it say, though it seek thee and think to find
One soul of sense in the fire and the frost-bound clod,
What heart is this, what spirit alive or blind,
That moves thee: only we know that the ways we trod
We tread, with hands unguided, with feet unshod,
With eyes unlightened; and yet, if with steadfast mind,
Perchance may we find thee and know thee at last for God.

Yet then should God be dark as the dawn is bright,
And bright as the night is dark on the world—no more.
Light slays not darkness, and darkness absorbs not light;
And the labour of evil and good from the years of yore
Is even as the labour of waves on a sunless shore.
And he who is first and last, who is depth and height,
Keeps silence now, as the sun when the woods wax hoar.

The dark dumb godhead innate in the fair world's life
Imbues the rapture of dawn and of noon with dread,
Infects the peace of the star-shod night with strife,
Informs with terror the sorrow that guards the dead.
No service of bended knee or of humbled head
May soothe or subdue the God who has change to wife:
And life with death is as morning with evening wed.

And yet, if the light and the life in the light that here
Seem soft and splendid and fervid as sleep may seem
Be more than the shine of a smile or the flash of a tear,
Sleep, change, and death are less than a spell-struck dream,
And fear than the fall of a leaf on a starlit stream.
And yet, if the hope that hath said it absorb not fear,
What helps it man that the stars and the waters gleam?

What helps it man, that the noon be indeed intense,
The night be indeed worth worship? Fear and pain
Were lords and masters yet of the secret sense,
Which now dares deem not that light is as darkness, fain
Though dark dreams be to declare it, crying in vain.
For whence, thou God of the light and the darkness, whence
Dawns now this vision that bids not the sunbeams wane?

What light, what shadow, diviner than dawn or night,
Draws near, makes pause, and again—or I dream—draws
near?

More soft than shadow, more strong than the strong sun's
light,

More pure than moonbeams—yea, but the rays run sheer
As fire from the sun through the dusk of the pinewood,
clear

And constant; yea, but the shadow itself is bright
That the light clothes round with love that is one with fear.

Above and behind it the noon and the woodland lie,
Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and subdued,
Triumphant in silence; and hardly the sacred sky
Seems free from the tyrannous weight of the dumb fierce
mood

Which rules as with fire and invasion of beams that brood
The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by
And leave her spirit released and her peace renewed.

I sleep not: never in sleep has a man beholden
This. From the shadow that trembles and yearns with
light

Suppressed and elate and reluctant—obscure and golden
As water kindled with presage of dawn or night—
A form, a face, a wonder to sense and sight,
Grows great as the moon through the month; and her eyes
embolden

Fear, till it change to desire, and desire to delight.

I sleep not: sleep would die of a dream so strange;
A dream so sweet would die as a rainbow dies,
As a sunbow laughs and is lost on the waves that range
And reck not of light that flickers or spray that flies.
But the sun withdraws not, the woodland shrinks not or
sighs,

No sweet thing sickens with sense or with fear of change;
Light wounds not, darkness blinds not, my steadfast eyes.

Only the soul in my sense that receives the soul
Whence now my spirit is kindled with breathless bliss
Knows well if the light that wounds it with love makes whole,
If hopes that carol be louder than fears that hiss,
If truth be spoken of flowers and of waves that kiss,
Of clouds and stars that contend for a sunbright goal.
And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of this?

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of birth,
Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that beat
And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,
May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,
May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet;
And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,
Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves that meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers aglow,
Breathe and brighten about me: the darkness gleams,
The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes below,
Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like dreams;
The silence thrills with the whisper of secret streams
That well from the heart of the woodland: these I know:
Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with showers and
beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun
Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers: mine eyes
Close, and the goal of delight and of life is one:
No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.
No more? But the joy that springs from them smiles and
flies:
The sweet work wrought of them surely, the good work done,
If the mind and the face of the season be loveless, dies.

Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to, cling,
If haply thy heart be kind and thy gifts be good,
Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood

That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed thing
 should,
 In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king
 Who stands where foes fled far from the face of him
 stood.

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,
 Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out fear?
 Pan's dim frown wanes, and his wild eyes brighten as thine,
 Transformed as night or as day by the kindling year.
 Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees, mine ear
 That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,
 Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me here.

The terror that whispers in darkness and flames in light,
 The doubt that speaks in the silence of earth and sea,
 The sense, more fearful at noon than in midmost night,
 Of wrath scarce hushed and of imminent ill to be,
 Where are they? Heaven is as earth, and as heaven to me
 Earth: for the shadows that sundered them here take flight;
 And nought is all, as am I, but a dream of thee.
 1891. 1894.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

November 4, 1889

Somno mollior unda

I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,
 Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.
 Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,
 Fair and flawless from face to feet,
 Hailed of all when the world was golden,
 Loved of lovers whose names beholden
 Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden
 Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,
Souls that hear not her word in vain,
Earth beside her and heaven above her
Seem but shadows that wax and wane.
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses
Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses
Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish
Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,
Laughs to know that it lives and dies,
Dies for joy of its life, and lives
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives
Change that bids it subside and rise.

II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,
Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering
Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.
Dawn and even and noon are one,
Veiled with vapour and void of sun;
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing
Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,
Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,
Touched by dawn or subdued by night.
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,
Swings the rollers to westward, clad
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,
Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,
Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,
Fill the world of the skies whereunder
Heaves and quivers and pants aloud
All the world of the waters, hoary
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder
With light more living and word more proud.

III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,
Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves whose glee
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that leaves them free,
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,
Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet it seems
Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and streams
Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and bowed,
Warped and wrinkled: here the days are fair as dreams.

IV

O russet-robed November,
What ails thee so to smile?
Chill August, pale September,
Endured a woful while,
And fell as falls an ember
From forth a flameless pile:
But golden-girt November
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning
As wanes the morning moon,
Here falling, here refraining,
Outbraves the pride of June

With statelier semblance, feigning
No fear lest death be soon:
As though the woods thus waning
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken
By grey December's breath,
These lordlier growths that sicken
And die for fear of death
Should feel the sense requicken
That hears what springtide saith
And thrills for love, spring-stricken
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter
That stings and spurs thy sea
Doth yet but feed and feast her
With glowing sense of glee:
Calm chained her, storm released her,
And storm's glad voice was he:
South-wester or north-easter,
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

v

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?
A day-born dream of divine unreason,
A marvel moulded of sleep—no more?
For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving
Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,
A peace more happy than lives on land,
Fulfil with pulse of diviner pleasure
The dreaming head and the steering hand.
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,

The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,
 And close mine eyes for delight past measure,
 And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture
 Falls as from heaven that its light feet clomb,
 So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture
 Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.
 To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—
 Such joy the vision of man saw never;
 For here too soon will a dark day sever
 The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer
 At once and brighter than dreams that flee,
 The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer
 Abides, remembered as truth may be.
 Not all the joy and not all the glory
 Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary;
 For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,
 And here to south of them swells the sea.

1890.

1894.

LOCH TORRIDON

TO E. H.

THE dawn of night more fair than morning rose,
 Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows
 Haste when the wind and winter bid them speed.
 Vague miles of moorland road behind us lay
 Scarce traversed ere the day
 Sank, and the sun forsook us at our need,
 Belated. Where we thought to have rested, rest
 Was none; for soft Maree's dim quivering breast,
 Bound round with gracious inland girth of green
 And fearless of the wild wave-wandering West,
 Shone shelterless for strangers; and unseen
 The goal before us lay
 Of all our blithe and strange and strenuous day.

For when the northering road faced westward—when
The dark sharp sudden gorge dropped seaward—then,
Beneath the stars, between the steeps, the track
We followed, lighted not of moon or sun,
And plunging whither none
Might guess, while heaven and earth were hoar and black,
Seemed even the dim still pass whence none turns back:
And through the twilight leftward of the way,
And down the dark, with many a laugh and leap,
The light blithe hill-steams shone from scaur to steep
In glittering pride of play;
And ever while the night grew great and deep
We felt but saw not what the hills would keep
Sacred awhile from sense of moon or star;
And full and far
Beneath us, sweet and strange as heaven may be,
The sea.

The very sea: no mountain-moulded lake
Whose fluctuant shapeliness is fain to take
Shape from the steadfast shore that rules it round,
And only from the storms a casual sound:
The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime
The supreme heart of music deep as time,
And in her spirit strong
The spirit of all imaginable song.

Not a whisper or lisp from the waters: the skies were not
 silenter. Peace
Was between them; a passionless rapture of respite as soft as
 release.
Not a sound, but a sense that possessed and pervaded with
 patient delight
The soul and the body, clothed round with the comfort of
 limitless night.
Night infinite, living, adorable, loved of the land and the
 sea:

Night, mother of mercies, who saith to the spirits in prison,
Be free.
And softer than dewfall, and kindlier than starlight, and
keener than wine,
Came round us the fragrance of waters, the life of the breath
of the brine.
We saw not, we heard not, the face or the voice of the waters:
we knew
By the darkling delight of the wind as the sense of the sea in
it grew,
By the pulse of the darkness about us enkindled and quickened,
that here,
Unseen and unheard of us, surely the goal we had faith
in was near.
A silence diviner than music, a darkness diviner than light,
Fulfilled as from heaven with a measureless comfort the
measure of night.

But never a roof for shelter
And never a sign for guide
Rose doubtful or visible: only
And hardly and gladly we heard
The soft waves whisper and welter,
Subdued, and allured to subside,
By the mild night's magic: the lonely
Sweet silence was soothed, not stirred,
By the noiseless noise of the gleaming
Glad ripples, that played and sighed,
Kissed, laughed, recoiled, and relented,
Whispered, flickered, and fled.
No season was this for dreaming
How oft, with a stormier tide,
Had the wrath of the winds been vented
On sons of the tribes long dead:
The tribes whom time, and the changes
Of things, and the stress of doom,
Have erased and effaced; forgotten
As wrecks or weeds of the shore

In sight of the stern hill-ranges
That hardly may change their gloom
When the fruits of the years wax rotten
And the seed of them springs no more.
For the dim strait footway dividing
The waters that breathed below
Led safe to the kindest of shelters
That ever awoke into light:
And still in remembrance abiding
Broods over the stars that glow
And the water that eddies and welters
The passionate peace of the night.

All night long, in the world of sleep,
Skies and waters were soft and deep:
Shadow clothed them, and silence made
Soundless music of dream and shade:
All above us, the livelong night,
Shadow, kindled with sense of light;
All around us, the brief night long,
Silence, laden with sense of song.
Stars and mountains without, we knew,
Watched and waited, the soft night through:
All unseen, but divined and dear,
Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near:
All unheard, but alive like sound,
Throbbled the sense of the sea's life round:
Round us, near us, in depth and height,
Soft as darkness and keen as light.

And the dawn leapt in at my casement: and there, as I rose,
at my feet
No waves of the landlocked waters, no lake submissive and
sweet,
Soft slave of the lordly seasons, whose breath may loose
it or freeze;
But to left and to right and ahead was the ripple whose pulse
is the sea's.

From the gorge we had travelled by starlight the sunrise,
winged and aflame,
Shone large on the live wide wavelets that shuddered with
joy as it came;
As it came and caressed and possessed them, till panting
and laughing with light
From mountain to mountain the water was kindled and
stung to delight.
And the grey gaunt heights that embraced and constrained
and compelled it were glad,
And the rampart of rock, stark naked, that thwarted and
barred it, was clad
With a stern grey splendour of sunrise: and scarce had I sprung
to the sea
When the dawn and the water were wedded, the hills and
the sky set free.
The chain of the night was broken: the waves that embraced
me and smiled
And flickered and fawned in the sunlight, alive, unafraid,
undefiled,
Were sweeter to swim in than air, though fulfilled with
the mounting morn,
Could be for the birds whose triumph rejoiced that a day
was born.
And a day was arisen indeed for us. Years and the changes
of years
Clothed round with their joys and their sorrows, and dead
as their hopes and their fears,
Lie noteless and nameless, unlit by remembrance or record
of days
Worth wonder or memory, or cursing or blessing, or passion
or praise,
Between us who live and forget not, but yearn with delight
in it yet,
And the day we forget not, and never may live and may
think to forget.
And the years that were kindlier and fairer, and kindled with
pleasures as keen,

Have eclipsed not with lights or with shadows the light
on the face of it seen.
For softly and surely, as nearer the boat that we gazed from
drew,
The face of the precipice opened and bade us as birds pass
through,
And the bark shot sheer to the sea through the strait of the
sharp steep cleft,
The portal that opens with imminent rampires to right
and to left,
Sublime as the sky they darken and strange as a spell-struck
dream,
On the world unconfined of the mountains, the reign of the
sea supreme,
The kingdom of westward waters, wherein when we swam
we knew
The waves that we clove were boundless, the wind on our
brows that blew
Had swept no land and no lake, and had warred not on tower
or on tree,
But came on us hard out of heaven, and alive with the soul of
the sea.

1890.

1894.

THE PALACE OF PAN

INSCRIBED TO MY MOTHER

SEPTEMBER, all glorious with gold, as a king
In the radiance of triumph attired,
Outlightening the summer, outsweetening the spring,
Broods wide on the woodlands with limitless wing,
A presence of all men desired.

Far eastward and westward the sun-coloured lands
Smile warm as the light on them smiles;
And statelier than temples upbuilt with hands,
Tall column by column, the sanctuary stands
Of the pine-forest's infinite aisles.

Mute worship, too fervent for praise or for prayer,
Possesses the spirit with peace,
Fulfilled with the breath of the luminous air,
The fragrance, the silence, the shadows as fair
As the rays that recede or increase.

Ridged pillars that redden aloft and aloof,
With never a branch for a nest,
Sustain the sublime indivisible roof,
To the storm and the sun in his majesty proof,
And awful as waters at rest.

Man's hand hath not measured the height of them; thought
May measure not, awe may not know;
In its shadow the woofs of the woodland are wrought;
As a bird is the sun in the toils of them caught,
And the flakes of it scattered as snow.

As the shreds of a plumage of gold on the ground
The sun-flakes by multitudes lie,
Shed loose as the petals of roses discrowned
On the floors of the forest engilt and embrowned
And reddened afar and anigh.

Dim centuries with darkling inscrutable hands
Have reared and secluded the shrine
For gods that we know not, and kindled as brands
On the altar the years that are dust, and their sands
Time's glass has forgotten for sign.

A temple whose transepts are measured by miles,
Whose chancel has morning for priest,
Whose floor-work the foot of no spoiler defiles,
Whose musical silence no music beguiles,
No festivals limit its feast.

The noon's ministration, the night's and the dawn's,
Conceals not, reveals not for man,
On the slopes of the herbless and blossomless lawns,
Some track of a nymph's or some trail of a faun's
To the place of the slumber of Pan.

Thought, kindled and quickened by worship and wonder
To rapture too sacred for fear
On the ways that unite or divide them in sunder,
Alone may discern if about them or under
Be token or trace of him here.

With passionate awe that is deeper than panic
The spirit subdued and unshaken
Takes heed of the godhead terrene and Titanic
Whose footfall is felt on the breach of volcanic
Sharp steepes that their fire has forsaken.

By a spell more serene than the dim necromantic
Dead charms of the past and the night,
Or the terror that lurked in the noon to make frantic
Where Etna takes shape from the limbs of gigantic
Dead gods disanointed of might,

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath
Makes noon in the woodland sublime
Abides as entranced in a presence that saith
Things loftier than life and serener than death,
Triumphant and silent as time.

PINE RIDGE: September, 1893.
1893.

1894.

ETON: AN ODE

FOR THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE

I

Four hundred summers and fifty have shone on the meadows
of Thames and died
Since Eton arose in an age that was darkness, and shone by
his radiant side
As a star that the spell of a wise man's word bade live and
ascend and abide.

And ever as time's flow brightened, a river more dark than
the storm-clothed sea,
And age upon age rose fairer and larger in promise of hope set
free,
With England Eton her child kept pace as a fostress of men
to be.

And ever as earth waxed wiser, and softer the beating of
time's wide wings,
Since fate fell dark on her father, most hapless and gentlest of
star-crossed kings,
Her praise has increased as the chant of the dawn that the
choir of the noon outsings.

II

Storm and cloud in the skies were loud, and lightning mocked
at the blind sun's light;
War and woe on the land below shed heavier shadow than
falls from night;
Dark was earth at her dawn of birth as here her record of
praise is bright.

Clear and fair through her morning air the light first laugh of
the sunlit stage

Rose and rang as a fount that sprang from depths yet dark
with a spent storm's rage,
Loud and glad as a boy's, and bade the sunrise open on
Shakespeare's age.

Lords of state and of war, whom fate found strong in battle,
in counsel strong,
Here, ere fate had approved them great, abode their season,
and thought not long:
Here too first was the lark's note nursed that filled and
flooded the skies with song.

III

Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest singers, here first
heard
Ring from lips of poets crowned and dead the Promethean
word
Whence his soul took fire, and power to outsoar the sunward-
soaring bird.

Still the reaches of the river, still the light on field and hill,
Still the memories held aloft as lamps for hope's young fire to
fill,
Shine, and while the light of England lives shall shine for
England still.

When four hundred more and fifty years have risen and shone
and set,
Bright with names that men remember, loud with names that
men forget,
Haply here shall Eton's record be what England finds it yet.
1891. 1894.

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.

But never death for him was dark or dread:
 "Look forth" he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,
 All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
 Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
 As all that lives of all that once was he
 Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
 Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,
 Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
 Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
 And life and death but shadows of the soul.

1890.

1894.

THRENODY

October 6, 1892

I

LIFE, sublime and serene when time had power upon it and
 ruled its breath,
 Changed it, bade it be glad or sad, and hear what change in
 the world's ear saith,
 Shines more fair in the starrier air whose glory lightens the
 dusk of death.

Suns that sink on the wan sea's brink, and moons that kindle
 and flame and fade,
 Leave more clear for the darkness here the stars that set not
 and see not shade
 Rise and rise on the lowlier skies by rule of sunlight and
 moonlight swayed.

So, when night for his eyes grew bright, his proud head
 pillowed on Shakespeare's breast,
 Hand in hand with him, soon to stand where shine the glories
 that death loves best,
 Passed the light of his face from sight, and sank sublimely to
 radiant rest.

II

Far above us and all our love, beyond all reach of its voiceless
praise,
Shines for ever the name that never shall feel the shade of the
changeable days
Fall and chill the delight that still sees winter's light on it
shine like May's.

Strong as death is the dark day's breath whose blast has
withered the life we see
Here where light is the child of night, and less than visions or
dreams are we:
Strong as death; but a word, a breath, a dream is stronger
than death can be.

Strong as truth and superb in youth eternal, fair as the sun-
dawn's flame
Seen when May on her first-born day bids earth exult in her
radiant name,
Lives, clothed round with its praise and crowned with love
that dies not, his love-lit fame.

III

Fairer far than the morning star, and sweet for us as the
songs that rang
Loud through heaven from the choral Seven when all the
stars of the morning sang,
Shines the song that we loved so long—since first such love in
us flamed and sprang.

England glows as a sunlit rose from mead to mountain, from
sea to sea,
Bright with love and with pride above all taint of sorrow that
needs must be,
Needs must live for an hour, and give its rainbow's glory to
lawn and lea.

Not through tears shall the new-born years behold him,
crowned with applause of men,
Pass at last from a lustrous past to life that lightens beyond
their ken,
Glad and dead, and from earthward led to sunward, guided
of Imogen.

1893.

1894.

THE LAKE OF GAUBE

THE sun is lord and god, sublime, serene,
And sovereign on the mountains: earth and air
Lie prone in passion, blind with bliss unseen
By force of sight and might of rapture, fair
As dreams that die and know not what they were.
The lawns, the gorges, and the peaks, are one
Glad glory, thrilled with sense of unison
In strong compulsive silence of the sun.

Flowers dense and keen as midnight stars aflame
And living things of light like flames in flower
That glance and flash as though no hand might tame
Lightnings whose life outshone their stormlit hour
And played and laughed on earth, with all their power
Gone, and with all their joy of life made long
And harmless as the lightning life of song,
Shine sweet like stars when darkness feels them strong.

The deep mild purple flaked with moonbright gold
That makes the scales seem flowers of hardened light,
The flamelike tongue, the feet that noon leaves cold,
The kindly trust in man, when once the sight
Grew less than strange, and faith bade fear take flight,
Outlive the little harmless life that shone
And gladdened eyes that loved it, and was gone
Ere love might fear that fear had looked thereon.

Fear held the bright thing hateful, even as fear,
Whose name is one with hate and horror, saith
That heaven, the dark deep heaven of water near,
Is deadly deep as hell and dark as death.

The rapturous plunge that quickens blood and breath
With pause more sweet than passion, ere they strive
To raise again the limbs that yet would dive
Deeper, should there have slain the soul alive.

As the bright salamander in fire of the noonshine exults and
is glad of his day,
The spirit that quickens my body rejoices to pass from the
sunlight away,
To pass from the glow of the mountain flowerage, the high
multitudinous bloom,
Far down through the fathomless night of the water, the
gladness of silence and gloom.
Death-dark and delicious as death in the dream of a lover and
dreamer may be,
It clasps and encompasses body and soul with delight to be
living and free:
Free utterly now, though the freedom endure but the space of
a perilous breath,
And living, though girdled about with the darkness and cold-
ness and strangeness of death:
Each limb and each pulse of the body rejoicing, each nerve
of the spirit at rest,
All sense of the soul's life rapture, a passionate peace in its
blindness blest.
So plunges the downward swimmer, embraced of the water
unfathomed of man,
The darkness unplummeted, icier than seas in midwinter, for
blessing or ban;
And swiftly and sweetly, when strength and breath fall short,
and the dive is done,
Shoots up as a shaft from the dark depth shot, sped straight
into sight of the sun;

And sheer through the snow-soft water, more dark than the
roof of the pines above,
Strikes forth, and is glad as a bird whose flight is impelled
and sustained of love.
As a sea-mew's love of the sea-wind breasted and ridden for
rapture's sake
Is the love of his body and soul for the darkling delight of
the soundless lake:
As the silent speed of a dream too living to live for a thought's
space more
Is the flight of his limbs through the still strong chill of the
darkness from shore to shore.
Might life be as this is and death be as life that casts off time
as a robe,
The likeness of infinite heaven were a symbol revealed of the
lake of Gaube.

Whose thought has fashioned and measured
The darkness of life and of death,
The secret within them treasured,
The spirit that is not breath?
Whose vision has yet beholden
The splendour of death and of life?
Though sunset as dawn be golden,
Is the word of them peace, not strife?
Deep silence answers: the glory
We dream of may be but a dream,
And the sun of the soul wax hoary
As ashes that show not a gleam.
But well shall it be with us ever
Who drive through the darkness here,
If the soul that we live by never,
For aught that a lie saith, fear.

1899.

1904.

THE WHITE MAID'S WOOING

“How will you woo her,
This white maid of thine?
With breaking of wastel,
Or pouring of wine?”

Not with pouring of cups
Or with breaking of bread;
But with wood that is cloven,
And wine that is red.

With rings will I woo her,
With chains will I wed;
With ships that are broken,
With blood that is shed.

Not with gold for a ring,
Nor with kisses on lips,
But with slaying of sailors
And breaking of ships.

“And how will you tame her,
This mad maid of thine?
With kisses for seal,
Or with gold for a sign?”

With a bit for the mouth,
And a ring for the hand:
With a neck-chain of foam,
Or a waist-chain of sand.

With the wind for a seal,
And the sun for a sign;
And so will I wed her,
This white wife of mine.

RECOLLECTIONS

YEARS have sped from us under the sun
Through blossom and snow-tides twenty-one,
Since first your hand as a friend's was mine,
In a season whose days are yet honey and wine
To the pale close lips of Remembrance, shed
By the cupbearer Love for desire of the dead:
And the weeds I send you may half seem flowers
In eyes that were lit by the light of its hours.
For the life (if at all there be life) in them grew
From the sun then risen on a young day's dew,
When ever in August holiday times
I rode or swam through a rapture of rhymes,
Over heather and crag, and by scaur and by stream,
Clothed with delight by the might of a dream,
With the sweet sharp wind blown hard through my hair,
On eyes enkindled and head made bare,
Reining my rhymes into royal order
Through honied leagues of the northland border;
Or loosened a song to seal for me
A kiss on the clamorous mouth of the sea.
So swarmed and sprang, as a covey they start,
The song-birds hatched of a hot glad heart,
With notes too shrill and a windy joy
Fluttering and firing the brain of a boy,
With far keen echoes of painless pain
Beating their wings on his heart and his brain,
Till a life's whole reach, were it brief, were it long,
Seemed but a field to be sown with song.
The snow-time is melted, the flower-time is fled,
That were one to me then for the joys they shed.
Joys in garland and sorrows in sheaf,
Rose-red pleasure and gold-eared grief,
Reared of the rays of a mid-noon sky,
I have gathered and housed them, worn and put by,
These wild-weed waifs with a wan green bloom
Found in the grass of that old year's tomb,

Touched by the gleam of it, soiled with its dust,
I well could leave in the green grave's trust,
Lightly could leave in the light wind's care
Were all thoughts dead of the dead life there.
But if some note of its old glad sound
In your ear should ring as a dream's rebound,
As a song, that sleep in his ear keeps yet,
Tho' the senses and soul rewaking forget.
To none so fitly the sprays I send
Could come as at hail of the hand of a friend.

1917.

NOTES

PREFATORY NOTE

The poems of Swinburne included in this book are arranged in their chronological order of publication in *Editiones Principes*. This is indicated by the dates affixed to the poems on the right hand side of the pages. Dates on the left refer to earlier printings of poems in separate form.

INVOCATION OF THE CHIEF HUNTSMAN

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

This prayer or invocation forms the prologue of *Atalanta in Calydon*.

The speaker beseeches Artemis and Apollo to aid the enterprise of the hunters who have gathered together for the purpose of slaying the wild boar which has devastated the region of Calydon.

1, 1. *Maiden . . . stars*. An apostrophe to Artemis as the goddess of virginity and of the moon.

1, 4ff. *Being treble in thy divided deity*, etc. Artemis (Diana) is described by Horace and Ovid as the three-formed goddess, *diva triformis*, ruling as Luna in the sky, as Diana on earth, as Hecate or Proserpina in Hades.

1, 8. *Mortal*. Deadly. The word refers back to *hand*.

1, 16. *On the knees of gods*. A Homeric phrase. Cf. *Iliad*, XVII, 514.

1, 17. *O fair-faced sun*. Apollo.

1, 26. *Laugh*. This verb must be understood with the succeeding nominatives, *earth, winds, fountain-heads*, etc.

2, 1. *Foam*. A verb. The construction is: Let earth laugh . . . and let the long sea laugh . . . and foam.

2, 5. *Shuddering and unfurrowed snow*. A description referring to *breast*.

2, 8. *Acheloiûs*. A river in western Greece forming one of the boundaries of Ætolia and emptying into the Ionian Sea.

2, 9. *Euenus*. A river of Ætolia. It has its outlet where the Ionian Sea narrows at the entrance of the Gulf of Corinth.

2, 11. *Twin-born with him*. Apollo and Artemis were the twin-born children of Zeus and Leto.

2, 18. *Atalanta*. An Arcadian maiden, a huntress and a votary of Artemis.

2, 20. *Ladon*. A river in Arcadia. *Mænalus*. A mountain in Arcadia.

2, 24. *Ætolian land*. The district in which Calydon was situated.

2, 25. *Lelantian pasturage*. A fertile tract at the mouth of the river Euenus (more frequently Evenus), in southern Ætolia.

2, 26ff. *To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus*, etc. The reference is to the defeat of the river god Acheloüs by Heracles. The god, who assumed the form of a bull, lost one of his horns during the combat. The legend may be interpreted figuratively as the wresting of tillable land from the power of the flood.

2, 31. *These virgins*. The maidens of Ætolia who form the chorus of the play.

"WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

This famous opening chorus of *Atalanta in Calydon* is an exquisite invocation to Artemis linking her advent with the awakening of earth in spring. It is supposed to be sung by a group of Ætolian maidens.

Metrically, this piece of "vocal incantation" is a superb illustration of the swiftness and elasticity of Swinburne's anapestic measures.

3, 2. *The mother of months*. Artemis, the moon goddess. Shelley, in the fourth act of *Prometheus Unbound*, calls the moon "the mother of months."

3, 6. *Itylus*. Philomela, daughter of Pandion, King of Attica, was dishonored by her brother-in-law, Tereus, a Thracian king: who then cut out her tongue in order to escape discovery. She, however, by means of signs woven into a robe, contrived to make the secret known to her sister Procné, the wife of Tereus. Procné thereupon killed her son Itys (Itylus) and served his flesh in a dish before his father. When Tereus pursued the fleeing sisters the gods rescued them by transforming Procné into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale.

3, 28. *The light that loses, the night that wins*. An allusion to the shortening days and lengthening nights of winter.

4, 6. *The oat*. The shepherd's pipe of oaten straw.

4, 12. *Mænad*. A female worshipper of Bacchus, who engaged in wild orgies in honor of the god. *Bassarid*. Bacchanals of Lydia and Thrace.

4, 15-16. *And screen . . . hid.* Screen has reference to the maiden *hid*, and *leave in sight* to the god pursuing. This peculiar form of grammatical construction is frequently used by Swinburne. It is technically known as chiasitic, a term derived from a Greek word meaning arranged diagonally.

"BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

The theme of this chorus is the Making of Man and the vanity of life. Man is the victim of the irony of the gods and his existence seems beset with unescapable contradictions.

4, 27-28. *Time . . . Grief*, etc. This bold and somewhat forced inversion of the usual attributes associated with Time and Grief is a striking example of Swinburne's fondness for antithesis and paradox, his sense of the identity that may underlie formal distinction.

"WE HAVE SEEN THEE, O LOVE"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

These lines form the opening of a chorus on the coming of Love in the guise of Aphrodite.

6, 7-8. *We . . . dove.* This couplet echoes a Biblical idea. Cf. *The Song of Songs*, IV, 1-2.

"Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair;
Thine eyes are as doves behind the veil."

6, 16. *But fate is the name of her.* The advent of Love causes death and tragedy, as is illustrated in the course of the play.

"WHO HATH GIVEN MAN SPEECH"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

The chorus is a passionate arraignment of "the high gods" who make men the sport of fate and hold to their lips "the bubbling bitterness of life and death."

Though this hostile attitude towards the gods has been likened by George E. Woodberry to that of Prometheus, it represents a point of view more characteristic of Euripides than of Æschylus.

6, 17ff. *Who hath given man speech*, etc. The idea of ruin befalling a man, as a consequence of unbridled and intemperate speech, is a familiar one in Greek drama.

7, 5. *Perdurable*. Lasting or imperishable.

7, 31. *The weeping Seven*. The Hyades, a group of seven stars forming a part of the constellation Taurus. Their rising with the sun was associated with the beginning of the rainy season. Virgil speaks of "pluvias Hyades," and Tennyson's reference in "Ulysses" is well known:—

" and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea."

8, 30. *Terrene*. Terrestrial.

"O THAT I NOW, I TOO WERE"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

These lines describe a peaceful retreat in the heart of Nature, beloved of Artemis. They are in keeping with the quiet mood of the play at the time when the hunters are resting after the slaying of the Calydonian boar. Swinburne's indebtedness to the classics is in evidence throughout the chorus. Cf. Sophocles, *Ædipus at Colonus*, ll. 668-693, and Euripides, *The Bacchæ*, ll. 402-431.

11, 22. *Fawnskin*. Bacchus is frequently represented with the *nebris* or fawnskin flung over his shoulders.

12, 7. *Thou, O Queen and holiest*. Artemis.

12, 31. *Iamus*. The son of Apollo and Evadne, a daughter of Neptune. Being, for a time, deserted by his mother, he was fed on honey by two snakes, and a bed of violets covered him. Apollo ultimately conferred prophetic gifts upon Iamus, which were transmitted to his descendants.

13, 34. *Orion*. In Greek mythology, a giant and a hunter. He was slain by Artemis, and after his death changed to a constellation.

"LET YOUR HANDS MEET"

From *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865)

This selection forms the main part of that noble antiphonal lament for the dying Meleager, which Swinburne considered the best thing in the play.

According to Greek legend, Meleager's life was bound up with the preservation of a brand which his mother Althæa had plucked from the flames when he was seven days old. At the conclusion of the Calydonian boar hunt, Meleager slew his two uncles when they tried

to deprive Atalanta of the spoil of the chase. Maddened by the loss of her brothers, Althæa cast the cherished brand upon a fire and thus caused her son's death.

14, 20. *Arcadia*. A region in the heart of the Peloponnesus. *Calydon*. An Ætolian city with its surrounding district.

17, 20. *Acroceraunian snow*. The Ceraunian mountains in Epirus. *Ford of the fleece of gold*. The Hellespont. The legend of Helle falling from the back of a gold-fleeced ram into the strait that bears her name is connected with the expedition of the Argonauts.

17, 24. *Chersonese*. A district north of the Hellespont corresponding to the modern peninsula of Gallipoli. Strictly speaking it borders on the Dardanelles rather than the Bosphorus.

17, 25. *Pontic seas*. The Black Sea.

18, 15. *Symplegades*. Two rocky islets at the entrance of the Euxine Sea. The reference is to the clashing together of these islands at the time when the vessel bearing the Argonauts passed between them and narrowly escaped destruction. *Propontis*. The Sea of Marmora.

18, 25. *Helle*. The Hellespont.

"BETWEEN THE SUNSET AND THE SEA"

From *Chastelard* (1865)

This lyric on the theme of Love at Ebb is one of Mary Beaton's songs in *Chastelard*, the first of Swinburne's dramas centring on the romantic career of Mary Queen of Scots.

A BALLAD OF LIFE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

In design and execution "A Ballad of Life" and "A Ballad of Death" illustrate the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite movement on the early poetry of Swinburne. Ornateness of technique, love of sensuous beauty, pictorial symbolism, elaborate personification, are outstanding characteristics of the paintings and writings of this deeply mannered school.

The following note on the models of these poems is cited from William Michael Rossetti's criticism of the first series of *Poems and Ballads*.

" 'A Ballad of Life' and 'A Ballad of Death' are Italian canzoni of the exactest type, such as Dante, Cavalcanti, Petrarca, and the other mediæval, with many modern, poets of Italy have written;

more especially taking the tinge which works of this class have assumed in Mr. Dante G. Rossetti's volume of translations, 'The Early Italian Poets.'"

23, 9. *Borgia*. Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519), Duchess of Ferrara, was a daughter of Pope Alexander VI, and sister of Cesare Borgia. While noted for her physical loveliness and distinguished for her patronage of learning, she has been charged with the grossest of crimes. Recent historical investigation has however cleared her name of the worst of these.

A BALLAD OF DEATH

From Poems and Ballads (1866)

23, 27. *Gorget*. An ornamental neckband.

23, 28-29. *O Love's Lute . . . therein*. Cf. *Psalms* CXXXVII, 2, in the Church of England Prayer Book version.

24, 4. *The kisses . . . wine*. Cf. *The Song of Songs*, I, 2.

24, 26. *Sendaline*. A medieval silken fabric used for silk dresses.

LAUS VENERIS

From Poems and Ballads (1866). Also printed in pamphlet form in 1866

In "Laus Veneris," Swinburne has treated the Tannhäuser legend from a novel point of view. The medieval narrative ended with the return of Tannhäuser to Venus after his fruitless pilgrimage to Rome, where Pope Urban had refused to grant him absolution for his sinful love. This conclusion forms the starting point for Swinburne's elaboration of the tale. To cite his own words: "Of the poem in which I have attempted once more to embody the legend of Venus and her knight, I need say only that my first aim was to rehandle the old story in a new fashion. To me it seemed that the tragedy began with the knight's return to Venus—began at the point where hitherto it had seemed to leave off. The immortal agony of a man lost after all repentance—cast down from fearful hope into fearless despair—believing in Christ and bound to Venus—desirous of penitential pain, and damned to joyless pleasure—this, in my eyes, was the kernel and nucleus of a myth comparable only to that of the foolish virgins and bearing the same burden. The tragic touch of the story is this; that the knight who has renounced Christ believes in him; the lover who has embraced Venus disbelieves in her. Vainly and in despair would he make the best of that which is the worst—vainly remonstrate with

God, and argue on the side he would fain desert. Once accept or admit the least admixture of pagan worship, or of modern thought, and the whole story collapses into froth and smoke."

The quatrains of "*Laus Veneris*" are a modification of the stanza form of the *Rubâiyât*, and George Meredith records that Swinburne wrote the opening verses immediately after a reading of Fitzgerald's famous translation.

27, 21. *The Horsel*. According to medieval tradition Venus held her court within the caverns of the Horselberg (frequently called Venusberg) between Eisenach and Gotha.

27, 22. *Wot*. Knows.

29, 20. *Arow*. In a row.

30, 22. *Chaplets*. Wreaths of flowers, leaves, or gold, for the head.

31, 1. *Adonis*. A beautiful youth, who was beloved of Venus. He was slain while boar-hunting. Moved by the lamentations of Venus the gods of the lower world allowed Adonis to spend six months with her in the upper world, and the remaining six in the realm of shades.

The reference to Adonis as a knight is in keeping with the medieval atmosphere of the poem.

32, 8. *Nathless*. Nevertheless.

32, 29-33, 4. The allusions in these quatrains are to "the ladies that were queens of fair green land," such as Helen of Troy and Cleopatra.

33, 1. *Lote-leaf*. The leaf of the lotus.

33, 4. *Semiramis*. A celebrated Assyrian queen.

33, 14. *Blinkard*. A person who blinks or sees imperfectly.

34, 24. *Teen*. Grief.

35, 7. *Slotwise*. The word *slot* usually refers to the track of a deer, as followed by the scent or by footprints.

35, 11-12. *Springe*. *Gin*. Snares for catching game.

35, 18. *Vair*. A species of fur used in the middle ages.

35, 21. *I sang of love too, knowing nought thereof*. Cf. Swinburne's comment on "*Laus Veneris*" in *Notes on Poems and Reviews*: "I have made Venus the one love of her knight's whole life, as Mary Stuart of Chastelard's; I have sent him, poet and soldier, fresh to her fierce embrace. Thus only both legend and symbol appear to me noble and significant. Light loves and harmless errors must not touch the elect of heaven or of hell."

37, 28. *The sweet-souled father*. Pope Urban IV, according to the legend.

37, 31-32. *The spot . . . with it*. Cf. *Jeremiah*, XIII, 23.

38, 29. *For I came home . . . with small cheer.* "The queen of evil, the lady of lust, will endure no rival but God; and when the vicar of God rejects him, to her only can he return to abide the day of his judgment in weariness and sorrow and fear." (Swinburne's *Notes on Poems and Reviews*.)

39, 2ff. *As when she came*, etc. The Greek name of Venus, Aphrodite, i. e., *foam-born*, is derived from the tradition that the goddess rose from the sea near Cyprus.

39, 29. *The thunder in the trumpet.* The sounding of the trumpet on the Day of Judgment.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

In addition to its superb lyrical qualities and magnificent invocation of the sea, "The Triumph of Time" has a distinct biographical interest. It was written in connection with the unhappy termination of the one true love romance of Swinburne's life, his rejection by a young girl for whom he had conceived an ardent affection. An unmistakable note of poignant regret and genuine suffering runs through the lyric.

49, 9ff. *There lived a singer in France*, etc. The reference is to the story of the love of Jaufre Rudel, a poet and a prince of Blaya, for the Countess of Tripoli. The voyage of Rudel from France to Tripoli, his meeting with the Countess, and his death in her arms, are recounted in the Provençal biography. Cf. Browning's "Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli," in *Dramatic Lyrics*, and Rostand's *La Princesse Lointaine*.

A LEAVE-TAKING

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

This lyric is written on the theme of hopeless love.

ITYLUS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

Swinburne records that this beautiful lyric was composed in a high-walled garden at Fiesole, while the air was full of the songs of nightingales. See Note 3, 6, for an account of the story of Itylus.

An interesting comparison may be made between this poem and Matthew Arnold's "Philomela."

54, 6. *The feast of Daulis*. The feast at which Tereus partook of the flesh of his son Itylus. Daulis, a city in Phocis, was the seat of the monarchy of Tereus.

ANACTORIA

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

Though deriving its title from the fragment by Sappho generally called the "Ode to Anactoria," this poem, as Swinburne has explained, must be regarded as an attempt to represent the spirit of the Greek poetess, with here and there a reminiscence of her actual words, rather than a translation of the text of the Ode. In this free paraphrase and expansion of Sappho's poetry he has tried, as he says, "to bear witness how, more than any other's, her verses strike and sting the memory in lonely places, or at sea, among all loftier sights and sounds—how they seem akin to fire and air, being themselves 'all air and fire'; other element there is none in them."

The Greek motto of the poem is taken from Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite," where the goddess asks the poetess, "What Beauty now wouldst thou draw to love thee" (Wharton's translation) or, "And whom now to please thee, must persuasion lure to thy love" (Symonds' rendering).

54. 19. *My life is bitter with thy love*. Cf. Swinburne's comment in *Notes on Poems and Reviews*: "In this poem I have simply expressed, or tried to express, that violence of affection between one and another which hardens into rage and deepens into despair. The key-note which I have here touched was struck long since by Sappho."

55, 11. *Erinna*. A poetess, and the friend of Sappho. She lived about the year 600 B. C.

55, 22. *Reluctation*. Reluctance or resistance.

56, 14-35. *For I beheld*, etc. These lines are adapted from the "Ode to Aphrodite," with an occasional literal rendering of Sappho's words.

56, 15. *In her high place in Paphos*. An allusion to the celebrated temple of Aphrodite at Paphos, an ancient city of Cyprus.

57, 6. *Bound with her myrtles*. The myrtle was regarded as sacred to Aphrodite.

57, 13. *Lesbian*. Sappho was a native of Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos.

57, 33. *Fillets*. Narrow bands to tie about the hair of the head.

58, 28ff. *For who shall change with prayers*, etc. In explanation and defence of this much criticized passage Swinburne wrote: "As

to the angry appeal against the supreme mystery of oppressive heaven, which I have ventured to put into her mouth at that point only where pleasure culminates in pain, affection in anger, and desire in despair—as to the ‘blasphemies’ against God or Gods of which here and elsewhere I stand accused,—they are to be taken as the first outcome or outburst of foiled and fruitless passion recoiling on itself. After this, the spirit finds time to breathe and repose above all vexed senses of the weary body, all bitter labours of the revolted soul; the poet’s pride of place is resumed, the lofty conscience of invincible immortality in the memories and the mouths of men.”

59, 6. *Pleiads seven*. A group of small stars in the constellation Taurus. Though only six Pleiads can be seen with the naked eye, seven are referred to in ancient tradition. This has given rise to the story of a lost Pleiad.

59, 26–60, 23. *Thee to the years shall cover*, etc. These lines recall, and are inspired by, one of the loveliest fragments of Sappho’s poetry. “But thou shalt lie dead, nor shall there ever be any remembrance of thee then or thereafter, for thou hast not of the roses of Pieria; but thou shalt wander obscure even in the house of Hades, flitting among the shadowy dead.” (Wharton’s translation.)

60, 32. *The high Pierian flower*. I. e., the gift of poetry. Pieria was the reputed birthplace of the Muses.

60, 34. *Deciduous days*. Days that pass away as the leaves of a tree fall and decay.

62, 9. *Last year when I loved Atthis*. Atthis was one of the closest of Sappho’s girl friends; but subsequently left her and attached herself to Andromeda, a rival teacher and poetess. There are several allusions in Sappho’s poetry to her grief at this defection.

62, 25. *Lotus and Lethe*. The fruit of the lotus and the waters of Lethe are both associated with the idea of oblivion.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

While paganism was not formally proscribed throughout the Roman Empire before the closing years of the fourth century, the publication of Constantine’s Edict of Milan in 313, followed by the Council of Nicæa in 325, may be said to mark the decisive victory of Christianity over the older faith.

A feeble flare-up of the ancient religion took place during the reign of the Emperor Julian (331–363). Julian had renounced Christianity, but, according to tradition, died with the confession on his lips that

Swinburne has used as a motto for this poem,—“Thou hast conquered, Galilean.”

In the “Hymn to Proserpine” Swinburne pictures a noble pagan of the type of Julian regretting the overthrow of the Olympian deities and predicting that certain humanistic elements of the old religion will live on in the heart of man and in the end triumph over the ascetic tendencies of the new creed. Though the poem is dramatic in form and expression, it reflects a spirit of neo-paganism that enters deeply into Swinburne’s own thought and is an essential part of his outlook on life.

62, 29. *Goddess and maiden and queen.* I. e., Proserpine, the wife of Pluto and queen of the world of shades. The allusion to her as *maiden* recalls her earlier history as the daughter of Ceres, from whom she was stolen by Pluto.

63, 6. *The bays.* The poet’s crown of laurel leaves.

64, 11-12. *O lips,* etc. A reference to the ascetic spirit of the early Church, as illustrated by its veneration of the relics of martyred saints.

64, 14. *Look to the end.* I. e., the vision of the ages to come, which the speaker describes in the following lines through the comparison of life or existence to a vast ocean, where the wave of the world rolls under the whitening wind of the future.

65, 19. *Cytherean,* Venus (Aphrodite).

66, 1. *Of the maiden thy mother.* The Virgin Mary.

66, 4. *A blossom of flowering sea.* An illusion to the myth that Aphrodite rose from the foam of the sea. Cf. Note 39, 2.

66, 17. *But I turn to her still.* The reference is to Proserpine.

67, 13. *A little soul,* etc. An adaptation of a line from Epictetus:—“Thou art a little soul bearing up a corpse.”

ILICET

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

This poem is a contemplation of death as the end of joy and sorrow. It resembles “The Garden of Proserpine” in theme and spirit.

IN THE ORCHARD

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

A lyric of impassioned love. As is indicated by the subtitle, this poem is a free adaptation, in metrical form and spirit of a Provençal Burden.

72, 11. *Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.* This refrain is directly derived from that of an old Provençal *aubade*: "*Oi deus, oi deus, de l'alba! tan tost ve.*"

73, 1. *Plenilune.* The full moon.

A MATCH

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

This poem is one of the most charming of Swinburne's lighter melodies.

FAUSTINE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866). Previously printed in *The Spectator*, 1862

Swinburne, in *Notes on Poems and Reviews* gives the following explanation of the origin and meaning of this poem. "'Faustine' is the reverie of a man gazing on the bitter and vicious loveliness of a face as common and cheap as the morality of reviewers, and dreaming of past lives in which this fair face may have held a nobler or fairer station; the imperial profile may have been Faustina's, the thirsty lips a Mænad's, when first she learnt to drink blood or wine, to waste the loves and win the lives of men; through Greece and through Rome she may have passed with the same face which now comes before us dishonoured and discrowned. Whatever of merit or demerit there may be in the verses, the idea that gives them such life as they have is simple enough; the transmigration of a single soul doomed as though by accident from the first to all evil and no good, through many ages and forms, but clad always in the same type of fleshly beauty.

"The chance which suggested to me this poem was one which may happen any day to any man—the sudden sight of a living face which recalled the well-known likeness of another dead for centuries: in this instance the noble and faultless type of the elder Faustina as seen in coin and bust. Out of the casual glimpse and sudden recollection these verses sprang." *Ave Faustina*, etc. This salutation to the empress, Faustina, recalls the traditional words of the Roman gladiators about to engage in mortal combat, "Hail Cæsar, Emperor! those who go to die, salute thee."

77, 13. *I know what queen*, etc. The elder Faustina was the wife of the Roman emperor Antonius Pius. The bust of this notorious woman, mentioned by Swinburne in his review of the poem, is pre-

served in the Vatican. Her daughter, the younger Faustina, married Marcus Aurelius, and is said to have surpassed her mother in profligacy.

78, 14. *Teen*. Grief.

78, 24. *The first Faustine*. Cf. Swinburne's reference to the idea of the transmigration of souls, in his comment on this poem.

79, 10. *Mitylene*. A city in the island of Lesbos: the native place of Sappho.

79, 22. *Epicene*. Belonging to both sexes.

80, 6. *The Lampsacene*. Priapus. There was a temple of this god at Lampsacus, a city of Asia Minor, where he was worshipped with wanton rites.

Rococo

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

The light dancing measure of the poem is in keeping with the fleeting character of the love described in it.

STAGE LOVE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

A BALLAD OF BURDENS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

86, 7-10. *Princes . . . desire*. The *envoy*, used as a postscript at the end of a poem, is a device frequently employed in old French verse.

BEFORE THE MIRROR

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

The picture of Whistler's that is the subject of this poem is now known as "The Little White Girl." Edmund Gosse states that, despite a subsequent quarrel between the friends, Whistler never forgot these lines of Swinburne and so late as 1902 recalled "Before the Mirror" as a "rare and graceful tribute from the poet to the painter—a noble recognition of work by the production of a nobler one."

EROTION

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

The woman, who is the speaker in this poem, recognizes the transitoriness of her lover's affection, but consoles herself with the thought

that she is the first object of his love, and with the joy of the present moment.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

Landor died in Florence September 17, 1864.

89, 31. *The flower-town*. Florence.

89, 34. *Freedom and spring*. Landor and Swinburne were both vitally interested in the struggle for Italian freedom. Florence was chosen as the capital of United Italy in 1865, about the time of the writing of this poem.

90, 17ff. *I came*, etc. Swinburne had visited Landor at Florence in the spring of 1864.

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER. 1852

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866). Previously printed in *The Spectator*, 1862

The date 1852, selected as representative of the domination of the forces of tyranny and repression against which the three "red" republicans of the poem revolt, was the year of the accession of Napoleon III to the throne of France. It was a period marked by the failure of popular movements in Central Europe.

92, 26. *A Pope*. Pius IX, who, after having been driven from Rome by Garibaldi, was restored by the aid of French troops in 1849.

92, 27. *Buonaparte*. Louis Bonaparte (Napoleon III).

93, 6. *Cayenne*. The capital of French Guiana. It was used at this time as a place of banishment for political prisoners. *The Austrian whips*. The allusion is to the Austrian oppression of Italy.

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION. 1860

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866). Previously printed in *The Spectator*, 1862

The date 1860 commemorates the triumph of the revolutionary movement in Italy under the leadership of Cavour and Garibaldi.

93, 13. *The rulers . . . the high-priest*. The opponents of the national uprising in Italy, such as the Emperor of Austria and the Pope.

TO VICTOR HUGO

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

In the "Dedicatory Epistle" to his collected poems, Swinburne

calls Victor Hugo one of the three living gods of his whole-souled and single-hearted worship. This fervent and sustained Ode is the earliest of many tributes paid by Swinburne to the great French poet and romanticist.

96, 15. *Bays*. The poet's crown of laurel leaves. The bay-tree was regarded as sacred to Apollo.

96, 23ff. *Born in those younger years*, etc. The years of warfare following the French Revolution.

97, 1-2. *Napoleon . . . Republic*. Napoleon was made Consul for life in 1802, the year of Victor Hugo's birth. In 1804 he was proclaimed hereditary Emperor of France.

97, 5-6. *Thou . . . kings*. A reference to the overthrow of monarchies during the Napoleonic wars.

98, 21. *Help to my sires and home*. An allusion to the shelter given by France to Swinburne's Jacobite ancestors, when they were exiled from England on account of their devotion to the Stuart cause.

100, 15. *Man's saviour*. Prometheus, who for the benefit of the human race stole fire from heaven. Zeus punished the Titan by chaining him to Mount Caucasus and sending an eagle to prey upon his liver.

100, 23ff. *Still shows him exile*, etc. Since 1855 Hugo had been living in Guernsey, as a voluntary exile.

101, 9ff. *Yet though all this be thus*, etc. The concluding verses of this poem should be compared with the "Prelude" to the *Songs before Sunrise*.

BEFORE DAWN

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

"Before Dawn" and "Rococo" belong to a characteristic group of Swinburne's lyrics centring on the thought of the fair but fleeting passion of love.

DOLORES

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

The speaker in "Dolores," as Swinburne explains in his *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, "decorates with the name of goddess, crowns anew as the mystical Cotytto, some woman, real or ideal, in whom the pride of life with its companion lusts is incarnate. . . . She is the darker Venus, fed with burnt-offerings and blood-sacrifice; the veiled image of that pleasure which men impelled by satiety and perverted by power have sought through ways as strange as Nero's before and

since his time; the daughter of lust and death, and holding of both her parents; Our Lady of Pain, antagonist alike of trivial sins and virtues: no Virgin, and unblessed of men. . . ."

From a metrical standpoint "*Dolores*" is one of the marvels of English prosody. It is a splendid example of Swinburne's unrivalled skill in the handling of anapestic measures. Professor Mackail refers to the poem as "that triumphant masterpiece of rhythm and diction which took the world by storm in 1866."

104, 23. *Seven sorrows . . . Virgin*. I. e., "The Dolors of the Virgin Mary" (*Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs*). These comprise seven sorrowful events in the life of the mother of Christ which are made the subject of meditation and prayer on the Friday after Passion Sunday.

Swinburne in "*Dolores*" deliberately contrasts the Madonna with the anti-Madonna, as in "*Laus Veneris*" and the "*Hymn to Proserpine*" he contrasts the Virgin Mary with Venus.

105, 3. *O tower not of icory*. Cf. *The Song of Songs*, VII, 4.

105, 35. *Libitina . . . Priapus*. Libitina was an Italian goddess of gardens and vineyards. As "*Venus Libitina*" she was associated with wanton pleasure. Priapus was a Greek deity, the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite. He was the god of husbandry and fertility and was worshipped in Asia Minor with voluptuous rites.

109, 16. *Myrtle*. The myrtle was sacred to Venus. Swinburne, in this passage, purposely reverses the traditions linked with the cypress and the myrtle.

110, 27. *Thalassian*. Venus. The derivation of the word, like that of Aphrodite, recalls the ocean birth of the goddess.

110, 33. *The blood of thy foeman*. An allusion to the persecution of the Christians by the pagan followers of Venus, i. e., the Roman Cæsars.

110, 34. *A sand*. The arena of the Colosseum.

110, 35. *As one smote them*. Nero. Referring to the Christian martyrs under Nero, Tacitus writes:— "In their deaths they were made the subjects of sport, for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when day declined were burned to serve for nocturnal lights. Nero had offered his own gardens for this exhibition, and also exhibited a game of the circus, sometimes mingling in the crowd in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes standing in his chariot."

111, 12. *Of limbs too delicious for death*. Women and children were amongst the martyrs tortured in the Amphitheatre.

111, 13. *When thy gardens . . . live torches*. See Note 110, 35.

111, 17ff. *When, with flame, etc.* An allusion to the tradition that Nero, having caused Rome to be set on fire, played upon the harp and sang while the city was in flames.

112, 13. *All shrines that were Vestal.* The sacred fire of Vesta, a Roman goddess who presided over the hearth, was tended by six virgins (Vestals) and kept perpetually burning on her altar.

112, 31. *Alciphron . . . Arisbe.* These names appear to be used by Swinburne without any definite historical or literary association, though the verse suggests certain correspondences with stories concerning Priapus related by Horace and Ovid. The historical Alciphron was a Greek rhetorician of the 2nd century A. D., the author of letters supposed to be written by celebrated courtesans. Arisbe, according to Greek legend, was the wife of Priam.

112, 35. *The garden-god.* Priapus. Statues or carved wooden images of Priapus were frequently placed in Roman gardens. The god was armed with a sickle and was fabled to be on the lookout for thieves.

113, 3. *The pearl of his oyster.* As indicated in Swinburne's footnote the reference is taken from Catullus, *Carm.* XVIII. The lines of the Roman poet allude to the cult of Priapus at Lampsacus in Asia Minor:—"For the coast of the Hellespont, abounding above all others in oysters, especially worships thee in its cities."

113, 7. *Thy father.* Priapus. See Note **108, 35.**

113, 21-22. *Thy lover, Ipsithilla.* Catullus, in *Carm.* XXXII, calls one of his loves, Hypsithilla.

113, 26. *The Phrygian.* Cybele. Swinburne, in his review of *Dolores*, describes Cybele as "served by sexless priests or monks" and therefore to be contrasted with the devotee of Venus, "Our Lady of Pain."

113, 29. *From the midmost of Ida.* Mount Ida in Asia Minor was a seat of the worship of Cybele.

114, 4. *Catullus.* A celebrated Roman poet of the first century B. C. The love lyrics of Catullus are characterized by exquisite grace and finish.

114, 9ff. *Out of Dindymus, etc.* Dindymus was a mountain of Galatia, sacred to Cybele the mother of the gods. From her shrine at this spot she is represented as traversing the surrounding country in a chariot drawn by lions. The pine and oak were venerated as emblems of Cybele.

115, 32-33. *Lampsacus . . . Aphaca.* Cities in western Asia associated with the worship of Priapus and Venus. Cf. Note **113, 3.**

116, 1. *Cotytto.* A Thracian goddess. Her festivals were celebrated with orgiastic rites.

116, 2. *Astarte or Ashtaroth*. Astarte is the Greek form of the name of the deity, who was called Ashtaroth (Ashtoreth) by the Canaanitish people and Ishtar by the Assyrians and Babylonians. She was a goddess of love and fecundity.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

According to Homeric tradition, certain groves sacred to Proserpine formed a gloomy entrance to the underworld, where the consort of Pluto ruled as queen of the realm of shades. Swinburne has used this conception to symbolize a mood of utter languor and weariness of life. As he himself states it, the verses express "that brief total pause of passion and of thought, when the spirit, without fear or hope of good things or evil, hungers and thirsts only after the perfect sleep."

117, 4. *Dreams of dreams*. The experiences of life, when recalled in dreamlike fashion by one who has entered in spirit the shadowy grove of Proserpine, seem—through their emptiness and futility—to be in themselves but dreams.

117, 8. *A sleepy world of streams*. Cf. the mood and the imagery of Tennyson's poem "The Lotus Eaters."

117, 27. *Poppies*. Proserpine is frequently represented as crowned with a garland of poppies, the flowers of oblivion.

118, 27ff. *Forgets the earth*, etc. Proserpine was the child of Demeter, the mother-earth. While gathering flowers in the Sicilian fields she was seized and carried off by Pluto to Hades, the realm of darkness and death. After long endeavor on the part of Demeter to regain her daughter, the gods finally allowed Proserpine to return to the upper world for six months of each year. The myth personifies the changes in the seasons, the perennial renewal and decay of natural life.

HESPERIA

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

"Hesperia" is characterized by Swinburne, in his *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, as "the tenderest type of woman or of dream, born in the westward 'islands of the blest,' where the shadows of all happy and holy things live beyond the sunset a sacred and a sleepless life. . . Here between moonrise and sunset, lives the love that is gentle and faithful, neither giving too much nor asking—a bride rather than a mistress, a sister rather than a bride."

The metre of "Hesperia" is anapestic, but manipulated in such a way that it closely approaches the rhythm of the classical hexameter.

121, 13. *The fortunate islands*. The Islands of the Blessed were fabled to lie in the far western ocean beyond the pillars of Hercules. Here in a land of perpetual spring, unvisited by snow or tempest, the souls of the good and great dwelt in eternal peace and felicity.

122, 13. *Myrile or poppy*. Symbols of love and oblivion.

122, 13. *Dolores*. Swinburne intends this poem to represent a deliverance from the passions of sense described in "Dolores."

123, 13. *Let us fly*. Referring to this flight, in company with Hesperia, from the snares of Dolores, Swinburne writes:—"But not at once, or not for ever, can the past be killed and buried; hither also the huntress follows her flying prey, wounded and weakened, still fresh from the fangs of passion; the cruel hands, the amorous eyes, still glitter and allure. *Qui a bu boira*: the feet are drawn back towards the ancient ways. Only by lifelong flight, side by side with the goddess that redeems, shall her slave of old escape from the goddess that consumes; if even thus one may be saved, even thus distance the bloodhounds."

LOVE AT SEA

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

As an imitation of the pictorial manner of Théophile Gautier the poem illustrates the influence of contemporary French poetry of the romantic school upon Swinburne. The particular model of this lyric is Gautier's "Barcarolle."

125, 19-24. *Land me . . . no maiden land*. Cf. with this stanza the following lines of Gautier:

"Menez moi, dit la belle,
A la rive fidèle
Où l'on aime toujours.
—Cette rive, ma chère,
On ne la connaît guère
Au pays des amours."

THE SUNDEW

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866). Previously printed in *The Spectator*, 1862

The sundew is a marsh plant frequently found on northern English moors. The leaves of the plant are covered with glandular hairs.

These exude glutinous drops that glitter in the sun; hence the name sundew.

Swinburne has seldom treated Nature so simply and directly as in this little poem.

FÉLISE

From Poems and Ballads (1866)

In a letter written to Ruskin in 1862 Swinburne explains the theme of "Félise" as follows:—"As to the subject, I thought it clear enough, and likely to recall to most people a similar passage of experience. A young fellow is left alone with a woman rather older, whom a year since he violently loved. Meantime he has been in town, she in the country; and in the year's lapse they have had time, he to become tired of her memory, she to fall in love with his. Surely I have expressed this plainly and 'cynically' enough! Last year I loved you, and you were puzzled, and didn't love me—quite. This year (I perceive) you love me, and I feel puzzled, and don't love you—quite. 'Sech is life,' as Mrs. Gamp says; '*Deus vult*; it can't be helped.' "

The motto of the poem, "*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*" (But where are the snows of yester-year?) is taken from one of Villon's ballades.

129, 21. *Plummets sound*. A reminiscence of a line in Shakespeare's *Tempest*:—"And deeper than did ever plummet sound."

129, 31. *That name of yours*. I. e., Félise,—loved as derived from the Latin *felix*, happy. In the next verse, however, the comparison of "a cat's splendid circled eyes" to the name, is suggested by the analogy between Félise and the Latin *felis*, a cat.

133, 11. *When have they heard us?* The arraignment of "the most high gods" in the latter part of "Félise" should be compared with similar expressions of feeling in "Anactoria" and in the chorus beginning "Who hath given man speech?" from *Atalanta in Calydon*.

133, 23. *Cry out*, etc. Cf. Elijah's taunting of the prophets of Baal as recorded in *I Kings*, XVIII, 27.

AN INTERLUDE

From Poems and Ballads (1866)

Two lovers of a day meet and part in Maytime.

SAPPHICS

From Poems and Ballads (1866)

The metrical arrangement of this poem is an imitation of a stanza form used by Sappho.

138. 15-16. *Lesbos . . . Mitylene.* Sappho was a native of Mitylene in the island of Lesbos.

138, 27. *Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo.* Apollo as the god of poetry and song presided over the Muses. Hence his title *Musagetes*, leader of the Muses.

138, 30. *Ah the tenth, the Lesbian!* Sappho was frequently referred to in ancient Greece as "the tenth Muse."

140, 12. *Purged not in Lethe.* I. e., unable to secure oblivion through drinking the waters of Lethe.

MADONNA MIA

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

This lyric should be compared with "A Ballad of Life" and "A Ballad of Death" as illustrating the Pre-Raphaelite vein in Swinburne's earlier poetry.

141, 2. *Vair.* A species of fur used in the middle ages. Cf. "Laus Veneris," page 35, line 18.

DEDICATION

From *Poems and Ballads* (1866)

The Dedication to the first series of *Poems and Ballads* is addressed to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, a celebrated English painter and a prominent member of the Pre-Raphaelite group of artists. He was a pupil of Rossetti's and a close friend of Swinburne's.

143, 17. *Seven years' traces.* This would fix the period of composition of the poems to which Swinburne refers as from 1859 to 1865.

143, 27-28. *Faustine . . . Juliette.* Names of women mentioned in the 1866 series of *Poems and Ballads*.

144, 13ff. *Some sang to me dreaming in class time,* etc. Edmund Gosse maintains that this assertion, which would place the earliest of *Poems and Ballads* as far back as Swinburne's school days at Eton, is refuted by the poet's definite statement that he "burned every scrap of MS. he had in the world" when he was eighteen. The destruction of such manuscripts would not however prevent Swinburne from remembering verses written in boyhood and including these, probably in a transfigured form, in the volume of 1866.

145, 13. *Though the world of your hands.* The paintings of Burne-Jones.

PRELUDE

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

The poems collected under the title of *Songs before Sunrise* were

mainly inspired by the long struggle for the freedom and unity of Italy. This conflict held the centre of the European political stage between 1850 and 1870, and enlisted the sympathies of a multitude of Englishmen. The liberation of Italy was in part achieved through the war of France and Sardinia against Austria in 1859 and the victories of Garibaldi in Sicily in 1860. It was completed by the occupation of Rome in 1870. The establishment of a monarchy under Victor Emmanuel was, however, a keen disappointment to many who, like Swinburne, had cherished Mazzini's vision of an Italian republic.

In the "Prelude," Swinburne sums up that change of spirit which had led him to abandon his former "love frenzy", as manifested in *Poems and Ballads*, and to consecrate his genius to Freedom and Italy.

146, 1ff. *Between the green bud and the red*, etc. Verses one and two refer to the writing of the first series of *Poems and Ballads*.

146, 21ff. *Then he stood up*, etc. An allusion to the time when Swinburne, under the influence of Mazzini, the great Italian exile and patriot, determined to devote his powers to the service of Freedom.

148, 25. *Menads*. Female Bacchantes. The name is derived from a Greek word meaning "to rave," an allusion to the frenzy of these devotees of Dionysus.

148, 32. *Thyiades*. Women of Attica who worshipped Dionysus with orgiastic practices.

148, 34. *Bassarid*. Frenzied votaries of Dionysus in Lydia and Thrace.

149, 11. *Cotys*. Cotys or Cotytto was a Thracian deity. The rites connected with her worship were wild and licentious.

149, 12. *Edonian*. The Edonians were a Thracian people. Æschylus in his fragment *The Edonians* links their name with that of Cotys.

HERTHA

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

Hertha, or Nerthus, was the old Teutonic goddess of the earth, of fertility, and of growth. In Swinburne's majestic poem this divinity becomes symbolic of a vast cosmic process, the evolution of the world-soul. These lines should be compared with the fifth canto of Browning's *Paracelsus*, and with Meredith's "Ode to the Spirit of Earth." They constitute one of the most magnificent poetic expressions in modern literature of what has been called the master thought of the nineteenth century—the idea of Evolution.

In a letter to Edmund Stedman, written in 1875, Swinburne refers to this poem as follows:—"Of all I have done I rate 'Hertha' highest

as a single piece, finding in it the most of lyric force and music combined with the most of condensed and clarified thought. I think there really is a good deal compressed and concentrated into that poem."

151, 29. *Before God was, I am.* Swinburne has in mind the allusion to Jehovah in *Exodus* III, 14, and to Christ's assertion of his divinity in *St. John*, VIII, 58. In *Hertha* the phrase "I am," used in the Bible of godhead, is applied to the world-soul.

152, 5. *I am stricken, and I am the blow.* The thought and imagery suggest a comparison with Emerson's "Brahma."

152, 26. *Hast thou known, etc.* In these queries addressed to man by the world-soul, Swinburne has in mind the sublime challenge of God to Job as recorded in *Job*, XXXVIII-XXXIX.

153, 19. *Tripod.* A bronze altar, supported by three legs, on which the priestess of Apollo at Delphi sat when delivering oracular responses. Here the word is used as a metaphor for priest or altar.

153, 22. *Born and not made.* A protest against the idea of a mechanical and special creation. Nature is conceived of as an unfolding and ever evolving process.

154, 13. *The lights.* Religious creeds and dogmas.

154, 18. *The shadow called God.* The idea of God as set forth in the creeds of the Church is represented as a transition between the night of ignorance and the morning of man's enlightenment, when the nature of the world-soul and its manifestation in the human spirit shall be fully comprehended.

154, 24. *The life-tree.* I. e., the spirit of the universe. The comparison is evidently suggested by the Norse myth of *Igdrasil*, the tree of Existence. The poet may have had in mind Carlyle's striking and imaginative use of this figure in *Heroes and Hero Worship*.

157, 16. *His twilight.* The twilight of the gods is a familiar conception in Scandinavian mythology.

158, 5. *Man that is I.* Cf. the following citation from a letter of Swinburne's. "But we who worship no material incarnation of any qualities, no person, may worship the Divine humanity, the ideal of human perfection and aspiration, without worshipping any god, any person, any fetish at all."

THE PILGRIMS

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

In "The Pilgrims" Swinburne represents the glorious though sacrificial onward march of the great souls of earth who, despite suffering and death, have dedicated themselves to the service of humanity.

The poem is in the form of a dialogue or antiphonal chant between these lofty spirits, and their fellow-men, who live only for self and the enjoyment of the present moment.

158, 6. *Lady of love*. The human race.

159, 18ff. *Shall be a part of the earth*, etc. Cf. "The Prelude," lines 131-140, for a similar thought expressed with equal nobility.

159, 32. *Than sister*, etc. Cf. *St. Luke*, XIV, 26.

160, 29-30. *Bring death lives . . . to some*, etc. The poet has in mind St. Paul's well-known comparison in *I Corinthians*, XV, 36-37.

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

Though Swinburne's enthusiasm for Whitman waned in later life he was at this time an ardent admirer of the great American poet whom he regarded as the inspired prophet and singer of Democracy in the New World. A year after this poem was written he praised Whitman highly in "Under the Microscope," and elsewhere spoke of his dirge on the death of Lincoln as "the most sonorous anthem ever chanted in the church of the world." How far Swinburne could swing from pole to pole in his literary estimates is amusingly illustrated by the fact that in 1885 he could refer to the Muse of Walt Whitman as nothing but "a drunken apple-woman, indecently sprawling in the slush and garbage of the gutter amid the rotten refuse of her over-turned fruit stall."

164, 13ff. *Not as one man*, etc. The sufferings of Christ are regarded as but one illustration of the martyrdom of the earth-god Freedom, who is crucified and scourged anew from age to age.

164, 23. *The stripe*. The mark made by a lash.

164, 28. *Metres*. Cf. page 164, 32-33.

COR CORDIUM

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

Cor Cordium ("heart of hearts") are the words inscribed on Shelley's tomb in Rome. The epitaph was written by Leigh Hunt.

THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

166, 1. *Maiden*. Italy. *Lady of Lands*. Cf. Browning's apostrophe to Italy in "By the Fireside." "Oh woman-country, wooed not wed."

166, 2. *Republican.* Though Italy was at this time a limited monarchy under Victor Emmanuel, Swinburne still cherished the vision of an Italian republic.

166, 5-6. *Red . . . white . . . green.* The reference is to the three colors of the Italian flag.

167, 6. *Twice hast thou spoken a message.* The occasions are stated in the two succeeding stanzas.

167, 7. *Kingdom and empire of peoples thou hadst.* An allusion to the sovereignty of imperial Rome over the nations of the ancient world.

167, 10ff. *Banner and beacon,* etc. Swinburne has in mind the part played by medieval Rome in rescuing Europe from the perils of anarchy and barbarism throughout the Dark Ages.

168, 7-8. *Green . . . rose . . . lily.* Cf. the reference to the colors of the standard of Italy in lines 5 and 6.

NON DOLET

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

168, 16. *The Roman wife.* Arria, the wife of Cæcina Pætus. Her husband being accused of having a part in a conspiracy against Claudius was ordered by that emperor to take his own life. As he hesitated to kill himself in obedience to this command, Arria seized the dagger and stabbed herself crying, "Pæte, non dolet" (Pætus, it does not hurt). See Pliny, *Letter* 316, 6.

THE OBLATION

From *Songs before Sunrise* (1871)

This lyric is an apostrophe to Liberty.

OREITHYIA

From *Erechtheus* (1876)

This selection is from the second chorus of *Erechtheus*. It recounts the myth of the rape of Oreithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus, by Boreas, the North Wind. The story is told by Ovid, *Met.* 6, IX.

169, 28. *Rhodope.* A part of the Hæmus mountains in Thrace.

170, 21. *Hæmus.* The mountain range now known as the Balkans.

STORM AND BATTLE

From *Erechtheus* (1876)

This magnificent chorus, the sixth in the play, was highly thought of by Swinburne. He describes it as "the choral presentation of

stormy battle between the forces of land and sea," and places it beside "the antiphonal lamentation for the dying Meleager," as representing "the two best things" in his Greek plays. The lines contain many reminiscences of Æschylus, and the sweep, power and majestic harmonies of the verse are in keeping with the great dramatic tradition on which the chorus is modelled.

172, 13. *What cloud upon heaven is arisen.* The allusion is to the threatened invasion of Athens by enemies from Thrace.

173, 13-14. *O strong north wind . . . given us again?* Boreas is entreated to help Athens for the sake of his bride Oreithyia, the daughter of Erechtheus King of Athens.

174, 1. *O son of the rose-red morning.* Boreas was the son of Aurora, the goddess of the dawn.

174, 7. *For now . . . is the harvest of spears begun.* The Chorus, with prophetic insight, describe the picture that arises before their foreboding minds of the desperate conflict between Athens and her foes.

177, 16. *But what light, etc.* The chorus closes with a prayer to the sun for light and grace.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1876

The scene of this poem is East Dene, Bonchurch, Isle of Wight. The magical and haunting cadences of "A Forsaken Garden" are in exquisite harmony with its tender and wistful theme, full, as one writer has put it of "the breath of dying summer, the perfume of falling rose-petals, the sadness of fading love."

181, 4. *Death lies dead.* Cf. page 180, 25-28. Death lies dead, in the sense that the forsaken garden can suffer nothing further from the powers of change and decay.

RELICS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed, under the title "North and South" in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1873

The laurustine reminds the poet, first of the sea-swept northern promontory where he has seen it growing, and second of the southern clime of Italy, where he links it with his memories of certain cities.

181, 6. *White laurustine.* The laurustine is a garden shrub, a native of the Mediterranean region, with dark green leaves and flat-topped clusters of white flowers.

182, 31. *San Gimignano*. A town of Tuscany in the province of Siena. It is surrounded by ancient walls and retains thirteen out of its original fifty towers.

183, 2. *Saint Fina*. A local saint of San Gimignano who died at the age of fifteen. The chapel of Saint Fina was built in 1468.

AT A MONTH'S END

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed, under the title "The End of a Month," in *The Dark Blue*, 1871

This poem describes the parting of a man from a woman of strong animal nature, and his realization that the love between them has been a fierce passion of the senses without any spiritual quality. The emotional power, fine descriptive touches, and wonderful metrical movement of "At a Month's End," entitle it to a high place amongst Swinburne's lyrics.

185, 29-32. *Best leave or take the perfect creature*, etc. Cf. Browning's lines in "A Pretty Woman."

"Is the creature too imperfect say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye."

A WASTED VIGIL

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed, under the title "A Lost Vigil," in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1867

187, 25. *Couldst . . . me*. Cf. *St. Matthew*, XXVI, 40.

187, 6. *And . . . sun*. Cf. with lines 2-3 of the poem, as a striking example of Swinburne's love of antithesis.

AVE ATQUE VALE

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1868

This noble threnody, in memory of Charles Baudelaire, must be ranked amongst the great English elegies. Though Swinburne from an early age warmly admired the writings of Baudelaire, he never met in person the distinguished French poet and critic to whom these lofty memorial verses are dedicated.

The title of the poem is a reminiscence of Catullus's "Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale" (And forever, brother, hail and farewell).

The lines from Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* may be translated: "Yet we should bear to him some flowers; the dead, the pitiful dead, have great sorrows, and when October, pruner of ancient trees, blows its melancholy wind about their tombs, ah then! they must deem the living very ingrates."

190, 5. *Rue*. The symbol of sorrow and remembrance. *Laurel*. The foliage of the bay tree, sacred to poetry.

190, 6. *The veil*. I. e., the body of Baudelaire.

190, 9. *The Dryads*. Wood-nymphs.

190, 12. *Half-jaded fiery blossoms*. Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* are poems of a morbid, exotic, and passionate character.

190, 15. *Tropic feet*. Swinburne has in mind the French poet's voyage to India in 1841-1842.

190, 18. *Thine ears knew*, etc. Cf. the references to the death of Sappho in Baudelaire's *Lesbos*.

190, 19-21. *Lesbian promontories . . . Leucadian grave*. According to tradition the Lesbian poetess Sappho, being disdained by a beautiful youth Phaon, cast herself into the sea from the rocky summit of Leucas, one of the Ionian islands off the coast of Acarnania. The story, though frequently alluded to by ancient writers, is without historical foundation.

192, 2. *Yew-leaves*. The yew is frequently planted in graveyards, and hence is a symbol of mourning.

192, 11. *Some pale Titan-woman*, etc. Cf. Baudelaire's *La Géante*.

194, 6-7. *And lay, Orestes-like*, etc. In Æschylus' *Choëphori* Orestes is represented as offering a tress of his hair as a sacrifice to the shades of the dead.

194, 9. *The low-lying head of Him, the King*. Agamemnon, after his return from Troy, was treacherously slain by his wife Clytemnestra.

194, 15. *Orestes . . . Electra*. The children of Agamemnon, who lamented and avenged his death.

194, 20. *The lord of light*. Phœbus Apollo, the god of song.

195, 8-29. *And one . . . unseen shrine*. In these two stanzas Swinburne has in mind an article written by Baudelaire on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, after the first performance of that opera in Paris in 1861. In this brochure Baudelaire refers to Venus as "Beauté divine, devenue diabolique en des temps qui ne peuvent la concevoir comme divine."

195, 8. *The ways Lethean*. I. e., the paths of oblivion.

195, 10. *That obscure Venus*, etc. The allusion is to the medieval conception of Venus enshrined in the legend of Tannhäuser. The goddess of love was transformed into a fallen spirit, a seductive en-

chantress who lured her victims within the caverns of the Venusberg, where she held her court with heathen splendor and revelry. See notes on "Laus Veneris."

195, 11. *Cytherean*. Aphrodite was fabled to have risen from the foam near the island of Cytherea.

195, 13. *Erycine*. A title of Aphrodite derived from Mount Eryx in Sicily. Here a temple was erected in her honor, and she was worshipped under the purer and loftier aspects of her divinity.

195, 19. *And now no sacred staff*, etc. A reference to the dramatic climax of the Tannhäuser legend, where the Pope's staff breaks into blossom as a token of God's infinite mercy and his willingness to forgive the erring but penitent knight, whom the occupant of St. Peter's chair has refused to absolve.

196, 12. *Sadder than the Niobeon womb*. The fourteen children of Niobe, the queen of Thebes, were slain by the arrows of Apollo and Diana.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1874

"Barry Cornwall" was the pen-name of Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), one of the most natural and gifted song writers amongst the minor poets of the nineteenth century.

EX-VOTO

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1877

The poet's prayer, that death may represent the merging of his being with the waters of the sea, is in keeping with his life-long passion for the ocean. He repeatedly speaks of himself as a child of the sea and identifies his own genius with the spirit of this restless and untamable element. See note on "Thalassius," pages 220-233.

199, 25-32. *When thy salt lips . . . my mother's*. Swinburne refers here to his narrow escape from drowning in October, 1868. While swimming off the French coast at Étretât he was carried out to sea by the tide. After struggling on for two or three miles in an equinoctial sea he was picked up in an exhausted condition by a passing fisher-boat. Amongst those who aided Swinburne at Étretât, on this occasion, was Guy de Maupassant, then a young college student home for his holidays.

For a full account of this incident, see Gosse's *Portraits and Sketches*, pp. 17-29.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *Belgravia*, 1876

This beautiful lyric is one of the finest examples in English of the *ballade*, a form adapted from French poetry. A *ballade* is a poem composed of one or more triplets of seven or eight lined stanzas, with a concluding *envoi*. The last line of each verse is a refrain common to all the stanzas. *L'envoi*, or "the despatch," closing the *ballade*, contained in medieval times an address to some noble patron of the poet. In modern examples of this type it frequently sums up the thought of the poem and completes its metrical scheme.

A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1877

This poignant tribute to Villon should be associated with Swinburne's translations of his poems, and may also be linked with an interesting reference to the French poet in the only address made by Swinburne on any public occasion. In it he said: "The Middle Ages brought forth a trinity of great poets, Dante, the Italian noble; Chaucer, the English gentleman; Villon, the French plebeian."

For an account of the *ballade* form, see notes on the preceding poem.

202, 21-22. *Golden morn . . . dusk of dolorous years*. I. e., the morn of the Renaissance succeeding the dusk of the Middle Ages. Villon was born in 1431. The date of his death is uncertain, since no authentic facts regarding his life are recorded after the year 1461.

202, 26. *When song new-born*, etc. Among the characteristics that mark Villon as the herald of a new order are the popular and realistic strain of his verse and the formative influence of his racy and vigorous use of the *Langue d'Oil* on poetry and the French language in general.

203, 14. *And plume-plucked gaul-birds*. A reference to the bohemian and vagabond life led by Villon in the streets of Paris. He seems for some years to have been the master spirit of a band of thieves and was on several occasions arrested and imprisoned for robbery. One of Villon's associates, Colin de Cayeulx, was condemned to death in 1466, as "an incorrigible thief, picklock, marauder and sacrilegious scoundrel."

203, 22. *A harlot was thy nurse*. An allusion to the debauchery of Villon's life. *A God thy sire*. Apollo, the god of song.

203, 23. *Assoiled*. Cleansed from stain.

SONG

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Examiner*, 1874. The lines were sung at Hollingshed's revival of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* produced at the Gaiety Theatre, London, Dec. 19, 1874

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1875

Commenting on the melody of this and similar pieces, in the *Poems and Ballads* of 1878, Edmund Gosse writes: "There is not here a question of the torrent of palpitating and trumpeting music which fills the choruses and odes of earlier volumes, nor even of the Corybantic dance-measures of the poems of 1866, but of a delicate, tremulous melody like that of a nightingale, poured forth in a stream of pensive but not dejected enthusiasm. This witchery of exquisite sound, the tone of the Æolian harp, had rarely been heard before in Swinburne's poetry, and was scarcely ever heard in it again. It is found here in its most harmonious ecstasy in such magical lyrics as 'A Forsaken Garden,' 'The Year of the Rose,' 'A Ballade of Dreamland,' and 'A Vision of Spring in Winter.'"

The circumstances connected with the composition of the first three stanzas of this poem recall the manner in which Coleridge wrote *Kubla Khan*, since these opening verses were produced by Swinburne in his sleep.

204, 17. *O mother-month*. In a letter to Lord Morley regarding the publication of "A Vision of Spring in Winter" in the April number of *The Fortnightly Review* for 1875, Swinburne writes: "I think myself April and not autumn or winter would be the time of the year for its birth—especially as it begins and ends with a reference to the 'birth-month.'"

205, 11. *Plenilune*. The time of full moon.

AT PARTING

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1875

CHILD'S SONG

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878)

FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1878)

The first of these songs was previously printed in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1867, under the title "Child's Song in Winter."

209, 1. *Our noisy norland*. Through his frequent visits to his grandfather at Capheaton the scenery of Northumberland was intimately bound up with Swinburne's memories of his earlier life. The spirit of this poem may be compared with the apostrophe to Northumberland in the drama of *The Sisters* (1892):

"The crowning county of England—yes, the best! . . .
Have you and I, then, raced across its moors
Till horse and boy were well-nigh mad with glee
So often, summer and winter, home from school,
And not found that out?"

213, 9. *Sallow*. Willow-tree.

213, 10. *Callow*. A low-lying, often flooded meadow.

213, 17. *On shores invaded*. A reference to the Viking invasions of Northumbria in the ninth century A. D.

213, 22. *The wide-winged raven*. The raven was the emblem of the Danes.

213, 24. *When monks affrighted*. The fury of the pagan sea-rovers from Scandinavia was particularly directed against the monks and monasteries of Christian Northumbria.

216, 27-36. *From hills that beheld . . . his stars*. This passage recalls Milton's visit to Tuscany in 1638 and his memorable interview with the blind Italian astronomer Galileo, in the neighborhood of Florence.

216, 28. *A shape*. Milton. *The blest souls' islands*. The Happy Isles were fabled by the ancients to lie in the western ocean beyond the pillars of Hercules. Here, however, Swinburne, in keeping with the allusion to Milton, may have in mind the old Celtic tradition regarding the British Isles as the abode of the souls of the blessed.

216, 30. *With eyes . . . blind*. Milton became totally blind in 1652, fourteen years after his Italian journey.

216, 31. *Vallombrosa*. A wooded valley near Florence.

216, 34. *The foot that she knew . . . September's*. Milton's reference in *Paradise Lost* to "autumnal leaves that strow the brooks in Vallombrosa" is, in all probability, a reminiscence of a visit paid to this well-known valley during his sojourn at Florence in the months of August and September, 1638.

216, 35. *The face . . . star-blind seer.* I. e., the face of Milton lifted up to that of Galileo. When recalling the experiences of his Italian travel, in the *Areopagitica*, Milton writes:—"There it was that I found and visited the famous *Galileo* grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in Astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought."

217, 1. *Pisa broods on her dead.* Some of the most famous sculptors and architects of Pisa have been her own sons who have lived and died in their native city. Amongst these may be mentioned Niccola Pisani, the designer of the beautiful pulpit of the baptistery at Pisa.

217, 3. *Prato gleams with the glad monk's gift.* The frescoes in the choir of the cathedral at Prato were executed by the Italian monk Fra Filippo Lippi between 1456-1466.

217, 11. *Saint Fina's town.* Saint Fina is a local saint of San Gimignano, a Tuscan town in the province of Siena. The town is surrounded by ancient walls and retains thirteen out of its original fifty towers.

218, 18-21. *That strange cliff-side . . . the old fierce ruin.* In a letter written to his mother during a tour in Auvergne Swinburne describes the cliff and castle referred to in this poem. "There is between Le Puy and Polignac one great cliff front of towering columns which faces the valley of the Borne river—columns broken off at a great height, and as regular as if designed for a cathedral: then a lower, more abrupt and irregular range; and then, further west, and covering a whole hillside, an immense heap of the same basaltic columns crushed sideways and slanting out of the accumulated weight and increasing pressure of the growing mountain thrown up above it. Then bowed and broken pillars . . . look as Burton said, 'like a bundle of petrified faggots under some giant's arm' forming a whole mountain-side. . . . I send what survives after the journey to Paris of some flowers I gathered at the foot of the highest cliff and others from the ruin of the Château de Polignac."

218, 23. *Whose blood in mine hath share.* Swinburne believed that his paternal great-grandmother was a lady of the house of Polignac. His cousin Mrs. Disney Leith has shown that the poet was mistaken on this point and that there is no evidence of French ancestry in the Swinburne family.

219, 18. *Tintagel.* Tintagel Head, a high cliff on the coast of Cornwall. Near it lie the ruins of an ancient castle famous as the reputed birthplace of King Arthur, and as the stronghold of King Mark in the romance of Tristram and Iseult.

219, 25-220, 8. *From scarce . . . queen and knight*. In these two stanzas Swinburne refers to the celebrated description in the fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno* where Tristram is represented as sharing the fate of a countless multitude of guilty lovers who, bitterly wailing, are tossed about unceasingly in the dark air by the stormy blasts of hell.

220, 1. *Hector's brother*. Paris.

220, 7. *Iseult*. The wife of King Mark of Cornwall, whose love for Tristram of Lyonesse forms the theme of the most purely Celtic of medieval romances.

THALASSIUS

From Songs of the Springtides (1880)

From an autobiographical standpoint "Thalassius" is one of the most interesting of Swinburne's poems. Under the guise of symbolic imagery, akin to that of classic myth, the poet has portrayed the earlier influences which shaped and gave color to his life, and traced the various stages of his spiritual development. As a piece of intimate self-revelation "Thalassius" should be compared with the noble Prelude to *Songs before Sunrise*.

The title of the poem means "From the Sea," and refers to the origin of the child who is the central figure of the narrative.

220, 25ff. *A babe asleep*, etc. The following extract from a letter written to Edmund Stedman by Swinburne illustrates the appropriateness of the poet's references to himself in "Thalassius" as a child of the sea.

"As for the sea, its salt *must* have been in my blood before I was born. I can remember no earlier enjoyment than being held up naked in my father's arms and brandished between his hands, then shot like a stone from a sling through the air, shouting and laughing with delight, head foremost into the coming wave—which could only have been the pleasure of a very little fellow. I remember being afraid of other things, but never of the sea. But this is enough of infancy; only it shows the *truth* of my endless passionate returns to the sea in all my verse."

220, 31. *Oread's*. The Oreads were mountain nymphs.

220, 34. *Cymothoë*. One of the Nereids.

221, 3. *The live sun's very God*. Apollo.

221, 19ff. *But he that found*, etc. Walter Savage Landor.

221, 35. *Hyaline*. A glassy or transparent substance or surface.

222, 33-34. *And gladly . . . lie dead*. Cf. Landor's inscription

for the Spanish patriots who died in defence of their country during the Napoleonic invasion.

"Emeriti . lubenter . quiescerimus.
Libertate . partâ.
Quiescimus . amissâ . perlubenter."

Swinburne translates this epitaph more literally in his *Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor*.

"Gladly we should rest ever, had we won
Freedom: we have lost, and very gladly rest."

226, 20. *Ineluctable*. Inescapable.

229, 29ff. *Round some fierce amphitheatre*, etc. Swinburne's portrayal of the Roman revels under Nero, in "Thalassius," should be compared with similar descriptions in "Dolores."

230, 23. *Furred Bassarides*. Thracian bacchanals. Their dress was probably made of fox-skins.

230, 26. *His flesh took fire of theirs*. This part of "Thalassius" symbolizes the mood in which Swinburne wrote the first series of *Poems and Ballads*.

231, 25. *Erigone*. In Greek mythology, the daughter of Icarius. Her father, who had been taught by Dionysus the culture of the grape, gave wine to certain shepherds. They, mistaking it for poison, murdered him. Erigone, distraught by grief, took her own life. She was afterwards placed by Zeus amongst the stars as the constellation Virgo.

232, 35ff. *For as wild mares in Thessaly*, etc. Cf. *Iliad*, XX, 223.

233, 24. *His father's hand*. The reference is to Apollo, not to Landor. Though found and nurtured by Landor his foster-father, the poet has described himself, in the symbolic imagery of "Thalassius," as the child of "the live sun's very God" and the sea-nymph Cymothoë. As a matter of fact the dedication of Swinburne's genius to the cause of Freedom, which he describes in the concluding stanzas of "Thalassius," was inspired by Mazzini, Hugo, and the events connected with the struggle for Italian liberation, rather than by the memory and earlier influence of Landor.

233, 26ff. *Child of my sunlight*, etc. Apollo is the speaker throughout this passage.

GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS FROM ARISTOPHANES

From *Studies in Song* (1880). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1880

The preservation of the form as well as the spirit of this celebrated Chorus, by Swinburne's translation of it into English in a metre practically equivalent to the anapestic heptameters of Aristophanes, is a very remarkable feat of prosody. In his prefatory note the poet states that his main desire was "to renew as far as possible for English ears the music of this resonant and triumphant metre, which goes ringing at full gallop as of horses who

'dance as 'twere to the music
Their own hoofs make.' "

234, 15. *Prodicus*. A Greek sophist and rhetorician of the fifth century B. C.

235, 1. *A wind-egg hatched in her bosom*. This "Egg Myth" is an ancient cosmological tradition which appears in various forms. According to one account, Erebus, the god of darkness, and Nox, the goddess of night, produced an egg, from which emerged Eros, the god of love, to create the earth. A similar legend, related by Hesiod, makes Eros the child of Chaos.

235, 18. *Orestes*. A notorious clothes-stealer of Athens, whom Aristophanes satirizes in a number of passages.

236, 4. *Ammon . . . Delphi . . . Dodona . . . Phæbus Apollo*. Deities and shrines associated with auguries. Ammon was an Egyptian god whose chief oracle was at Memphis. Delphi in Phocis and Dodona in Epirus were seats of famous oracles of Apollo and Zeus.

EVENING ON THE BROADS

From *Studies in Song* (1880)

The metre of this poem is anapestic, but Swinburne has manipulated it so as to produce the effect of classical dactylic measures transposed to an English key.

The scenery described in these lines is that of the well-known Norfolk Broads, shallow meres between the Bure river and the North Sea.

236, 11. *Over two shadowless waters*. I. e., the North Sea and the Norfolk Broads. The various effects of the twilight on the ocean and inland waters are beautifully contrasted throughout the course of the poem, with a rare magic of word painting.

236, 14. *Waves and wastes of the land . . . night.* The land, since it lies to the West, is still partially lit by the sun.

236, 15. *Inland glimmer the shallows.* The average depth of the Norfolk Broads is about eight feet.

236, 16. *Yonder the depths.* An allusion to the North Sea.

240, 21-241, 9. *Here in Shakespeare's vision,* etc. This passage refers to the description in *The Winter's Tale* of the finding of the babe Perdita by an aged shepherd, after she had been left by Antigonus on the coast of "A desert Country near the Sea." As the setting of the incident is imaginary, Swinburne fancies that Shakespeare, in dreaming of "a shore unbeheld of his eyes," had in mind a landscape similar to that pictured in the present poem.

241, 18. *Ululation.* Wailing.

BY THE NORTH SEA

From *Studies in Song* (1880)

The locality described in "By the North Sea," is Dunwich on the Suffolk coast. In the "Dedicatory Epistle," prefixed to his collected poems, Swinburne writes of "the dreary beauty, inhuman if not unearthly in its desolation, of the innumerable creeks and inlets, lined and paven with sea-flowers, which make of the salt marshes a fit and funereal setting, a fatal and appropriate foreground, for the supreme desolation of the relics of Dunwich; the beautiful and awful solitude of a wilderness on which the sea has forbidden man to build or live, overtopped and bounded by the tragic and ghastly solitude of a headland on which the sea has forbidden the works of human charity and piety to survive."

I

244, 10. *Fortlice.* A small outwork of a fortification.

246, 1. *In the valley . . . decision.* Cf. *Joel*, III, 14.

VI

246, 26-27. *Self-begotten,* etc. The phraseology is suggested by the Church of England Prayer Book version of the Nicene Creed.

247, 19. *Here thy throne,* etc. Dunwich was the seat of a very ancient episcopal see. This, however, became extinct in the tenth century as a result of the Viking invasions.

247, 28. *Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm.* Cf. the following allusion to "By the North Sea," in a letter of Swinburne's to Lord Houghton. "Do you know the 'dead cathedral' city which I have

tried to describe in the last poem in this book, Dunwich in Suffolk? The whole picture is from life—salt marshes, ruins and bones protruding seawards through the soil of the crumbling sandbanks.

248, 1. Hospice. A house of rest for travellers maintained by a religious order.

248, 2. Chancel. The eastern part of a church, reserved for the clergy and choir.

248, 11. Cloister. The arched and covered way running around the walls of a monastery or convent, usually on the inner court.

VII

249, 22. Our father. The sun-god Apollo.

PRELUDE. TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882). Previously printed in *Pleasure: a Holiday Book of Prose and Verse*, 1871

251, 13—252, 25. Love, that is first and last of all things made, etc. These lines introduce Swinburne's representation of the romance of Tristram and Iseult by a glowing apostrophe to Love as the animating soul of the universe. In their Platonic idealism and romantic fervor they recall Shelley's impassioned invocation of Love in "Prometheus Unbound" and "Adonais."

252, 7. Terrene. Terrestrial.

252, 23. These twain. Tristram and Iseult.

253, 30—255, 24. And the sweet shining signs, etc. This "jewelled calendar of the months, and of their several heroines" with its sustained and magnificent comparisons, brilliant coloring, and pomp of language, is a splendid illustration of those ornate and eloquent qualities of Swinburne's verse which might enable him to dispute with Dryden the title of "prince of English rhetorical poets."

"The world of Swinburne," writes Professor Woodberry, "is well symbolized by that Zodiac of the burning signs of love that he named in the prelude to *Tristram of Lyonesse*,—the signs of Helen, Hero, Alcione, Iseult, Rosamond, Dido, Juliet, Cleopatra, Francesca, Thisbe, Angelica, Guinevere; under the heavens of these starry names the poet moves in his place apart and sees his visions of woe and wrath and weaves his dream of the loves and the fates of men."

253, 38. Helen. In Greek legend, the wife of Menelaus, whose abduction by Paris was the cause of the Trojan war.

254, 6. Hero. A priestess of Aphrodite at Sestos, on the Hellespont, beloved by Leander.

254, 7. *The star that Marlowe sang into our skies.* A reference to Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.

254, 10. *Alcyone.* The daughter of Æolus and wife of Ceyx. After the loss of her husband she cast herself into the sea and was changed into a kingfisher. See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xi.

254, 16. *My birth-month star.* Swinburne was born on the 5th of April, 1837.

254, 17. *Iseult.* The heroine of the greatest of Celtic love-tales. She was the daughter of an Irish sovereign and the wife of King Mark of Cornwall. Her love for Tristram of Lyonesse is the theme of various medieval romances and has been retold by Tennyson, Arnold and Swinburne. It has been given an immortal musical setting in Wagner's *Tristram und Isolde*.

254, 20. *Rosamond.* The "Fair Rosamond" of Henry II. See Scott's *The Talisman and Woodstock*.

254, 23-24. *Her signal sphere, etc.* An allusion to the desertion of Dido by Æneas, and the self-inflicted death of the Carthaginian queen on the funeral pyre. See Virgil's *Æneid*, iv.

254, 30. *Mix . . . Veronese.* The scene of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is laid in Verona.

254, 38. *Sweet tears for Phæthon disorbed and dead.* After Phæthon had been struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus and hurled from his seat in the chariot of the sun, his body fell into the river Eridanus. His sisters, the Heliades, lamenting his fate by the banks of this stream, were turned into poplar-trees, and their tears into amber.

255, 4. *Francesca's.* The story of Paolo and Francesca and their sorrowful fate is related in the fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno*.

255, 6. *Thisbe.* Chaucer in his *Legend of Good Women* and Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* refer to the classical love-tale of Pyramus and Thisbe.

255, 10. *Angelica's.* The love coquetries of the beautiful but fickle Angelica are recounted in Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. His unrequited love for this princess was the cause of Orlando's madness.

255, 14. *Guenevere's.* Swinburne's "sweet shining signs" of the heroines of love is fittingly closed with the emblem of Guenevere, whose love for Sir Lancelot, with its tragic consequences, is a central theme of the cycle of Arthurian romance.

255, 23. *Antiphones.* Hymns or psalms, the verses of which are sung responsively.

256, 15. *And her's.* Dante's Beatrice.

256. 21-22. *For these too . . . saw Dante.* An allusion to the fa-

mous episode in the fifth canto of Dante's *Inferno* where Tristram and Isolde are represented as sharing the fate of a countless multitude of guilty lovers, who, bitterly wailing, are tossed about unceasingly in the dark air by the stormy blasts of hell. (Cf. the references to Tristram and Isolde in "Four Songs of Four Seasons," pages 219-220.)

256, 29-30. *They have the night*, etc. These elevated and majestic lines, reflective yet impassioned, re-echo the mood of the poet's *Hymn to Proserpine* conjoined with the conviction that love, though subject to change and death, is to be cherished for the rapture and revelation it brings. Through the history of the world's great lovers, such as Tristram and Isolde, this truth regarding the quality and essential worth of love is attested in lives "spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears."

ISEULT OF IRELAND

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

This passage, descriptive of Iseult and her fateful voyage from Ireland to Cornwall, is taken from the first canto of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, entitled "The Sailing of the Swallow." (Previously printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1877.)

258, 6. *Ireland's king*. Gurmun, the father of Iseult.

258, 11. *Lyonesse*. An imaginary region, celebrated in Celtic legend as Tristram's native country. It is now reputed to lie under forty fathoms of water between Land's End on the coast of Cornwall and the isles of Scilly.

258, 12. *Carlion*. Historically, Carlion (more frequently spelt Cærlion) was an ancient city of Roman Britain situated at the juncture of the rivers Usk and Severn, south of the Welsh mountains. In medieval romance Cærlion is often referred to as one of the capitals of King Arthur, and it is mentioned by Gottfried von Strassburg as the place where Iseult underwent the ordeal by fire.

258, 14. *Tintagel*. Tintagel Head, a high cliff on the coast of Cornwall. The ruined castle near it is traditionally regarded as the former stronghold of King Mark. It is intimately associated with the love story of Tristram and Iseult.

258, 22. *Iseult*. The wife of King Mark of Cornwall, whose love for Tristram forms the theme of that incomparable Celtic romance on which Swinburne has based his poem.

259, 4. *Implicated*. Infolded or entangled.

259, 6. *Plenilune*. The time of full moon.

260, 7. *The star of her sweet living soul*. Tristram of Lyonesse.

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

This selection, taken from the eighth canto of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, describes the swimming of Tristram in the dawn of the sun just before the battle in which he is mortally wounded. The glow and passion that pervade the lines are inspired by Swinburne's own love of the sea.

The sheer physical delight of the expert swimmer in breasting the waves has seldom received so adequate an expression in literature.

261, 30. *Naked, and godlike of his mould as he.* A comparison between Tristram and Achilles.

261, 31. *Whose . . . Troy.* Hector was pursued three times around the walls of Troy by the "swift-footed" Achilles.

261, 33-34. *As, ere the knife . . . pyre.* The shearing of the locks of Achilles, as a votive-offering to be placed on the funeral pyre of Patroclus, is recorded in the twenty-third book of the Iliad.

DICKENS

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

In a chapter on "Swinburne the Dickensian" in her account of the home life of the poet at "The Pines," Mrs. Watts-Dunton writes: "In English fiction Dickens was his first love. In that small space of his life covered by his expression "When I was a kid at Eton," the time during which the Master was still putting out his "two green leaves" a month, he came under the Dickens spell, and he remained under it to the last. He had the same sort of affection—if less in degree—for Dickens that he entertained for those members of his family who were the companions of his boyhood. He admired Scott. He venerated Hugo. He loved Dickens.

ADIEUX À MARIE STUART

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

264, 1. *Queen, for whose house my fathers fought.* Swinburne spoke of himself as belonging to a family "which in every Catholic rebellion from the days of my own Queen Mary to those of Charles Edward had given their blood like water and their lands like dust for the Stuarts." In alluding to the poet's worship of the memory of Mary Queen of Scots, Edmund Gosse states: "The romance which hung about the history of his Border ancestors extended to the legend that Thomas Swinburne of Capheaton had taken arms for the de-

fence of Mary Stuart somewhere between Lochleven and Langside, and had succumbed to the irresistible charm of her presence."

264, 6. *Have given you of my life.* A reference to the composition of Swinburne's dramatic trilogy on Mary Queen of Scots, which extended over twenty years of his life. The plays were published in the following order: *Chastelard* (1865), *Bothwell* (1874), *Mary Stuart* (1881).

264, 21-24. *Long since . . . Hermitage.* This passage, according to Gosse, is a recollection of a day spent by the poet on the banks of the Water of Hermitage at least thirty years before the writing of the "Adieux à Marie Stuart." On that occasion the boy's imagination was kindled by the sight of the fortalice in Roxburghshire, which is celebrated as the scene of Mary's visit to the wounded Bothwell.

267, 14-16. *The song . . . that took your praise up twenty years ago.* See Note on line 6.

HERSE

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

The title means "Dew" and Swinburne refers in this poem to the Greek use of the word as a name for a new-born child.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

A CHILD'S FUTURE

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

271, 17. *Son first-born of the morning.* A reference to Marlowe's place in the dawn of Elizabethan drama.

271, 24-25. "*If all the pens . . . masters' thoughts.*" These two lines are quoted from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, part I, Act v, Sc. 1.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

BEN JONSON

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

THE MANY

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

This and the four preceding sonnets are included in a series of twenty-one *Sonnets on English Dramatic Poets (1590-1650)*.

The nine dramatists, briefly alluded to in these lines, are all predecessors of Shakespeare and representative of the earlier years of the Elizabethan epoch.

CHILDREN

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

This is Section XXII of the collection of poems on childhood entitled *A Dark Month*.

274, 1. *Of such is the kingdom in heaven.* Cf. *S. Matt. XVIII, 1-4*.

274, 3-4. *From the crowning star . . . north world's head.* I. e., the Pole-star, the brightest star of seven that compose the constellation of *Ursa Minor*.

CHILD AND POET

From *Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems* (1882)

This is Section XXIX of the collection of childhood lyrics entitled *A Dark Month*.

ÉTUDE RÉALISTE

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

The title means, "A Realistic Sketch." For a commentary on Swinburne's poems on infancy see Mrs. Watts-Dunton's chapter "The Sea and the Babies" in *The Home Life of Swinburne*.

BABYHOOD

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

THE ROUNDEL

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

The roundel is a poem in a fixed form borrowed from the French. As adapted by Swinburne it consists of nine lines with two refrains

arranged as follows: a, b, a (and refrain); b, a, b; a, b, a (and refrain).

The refrain, as in the rondeau and rondel, is a repetition of part of the first line.

BEFORE SUNSET

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

ON AN OLD RONDEL

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

This is the second of two poems on an old roundel translated by D. G. Rossetti from the French of Villon.

279, 5. *A sad glad poet.* Villon.

279, 12. *A nearer voice.* Rossetti.

ENVOI

From *A Century of Roundels* (1883)

This charming Envoi, concluding *A Century of Roundels*, is an admirable example of Swinburne's skill in handling this light and graceful form of verse. The delicacy and dexterity of his touch is in keeping with the fragile and dainty web of song enshrined in the roundel.

ON A COUNTRY ROAD

From *A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems* (1884). Previously printed in *The Nineteenth Century*, 1884

280, 1. *Pleached lanes.* Lanes shaded by a canopy of interwoven boughs.

THE SUNBOWS

From *A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems* (1884)

A *sunbow* is the iris formed by the refraction of light on spray.

"The *sunbow's* rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven."

Byron, *Manfred*, ii, 2.

ON THE VERGE

From *A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems* (1884)

282, 13. *Here begins the sea*, etc. I. e., the North Sea, whose waters merge with those of the North-Atlantic and Arctic oceans, and hence extend towards the Pole without a definite continental boundary.

Mrs. Watts-Dunton states, that part of *A Midsummer Holiday* was written at Cromer on the coast of Norfolk.

283, 1-2. *Where the waste Land's End . . . control.* Swinburne here contrasts the North Sea with waters, such as the English Channel, which have "their borders fixed beyond them."

LINES ON THE MONUMENT OF GIUSEPPE MAZZINI

From *A Midsummer Holiday and Other Poems* (1884)

Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian patriot, whose influence upon Swinburne was only equalled by that of Landor and Hugo, died in 1872.

The monument referred to in the poem is in the Campo Santo of Genoa. In writing to his mother, in 1888, Swinburne makes the following allusion to this statue of Mazzini: "I am very glad you saw the statue tho' not the tomb of my beloved friend and leader—I may call him so as he was good enough to reckon me among his friends and disciples. I wish you had seen him living. His face was indeed 'as it had been the face of an angel.'"

284, 20. *Alighieri.* Dante.

284, 21. *Angelo.* Michelangelo.

285, 9-12. *But this man . . . did rise.* A reference to Mazzini as the liberator of Italy.

285, 21-24. *City superb,* etc. Columbus and Mazzini were both natives of Genoa.

THE COMMONWEAL

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed, under the title "The Jubilee," in pamphlet form, and also in *The Nineteenth Century*, 1887

This noble ode was written in commemoration of Queen Victoria's golden jubilee. In an unpublished introduction to the separate issue of these verses, Swinburne gives the following summary of their contents. "This poem on the Jubilee does not in any way pretend or presume to touch upon the official province of a Poet Laureate. The matters of which it attempts to treat are the national character and the national progress of the commonweal of England during the last fifty years; its real if gradual advance and development in spite of all that has occurred to baffle the aspirations and disappoint the expectations of those who looked forward with confidence to an epoch of universal peace and undisturbed improvement; its general hospitality towards exiled and defeated men of all classes and all opinions; its generous, unselfish and loyal sympathies: the crowning distinction

conferred on it by the triumphs of science and the discoveries of philosophy; and, finally, the just and special ground for patriotic pride, trust, and gratitude, which Englishmen may derive from such a retrospect as this." (See Thomas J. Wise's *Bibliography of the Writings of Swinburne*, p. 392.)

286, 1-5. *Eight hundred years and twenty one*, etc. I. e., since the Norman Conquest of England in 1066.

286, 10. *Runnymede*. A meadow on the right bank of the Thames in Surrey. It is celebrated in history as the place where the barons forced King John to sign Magna Charta in 1215.

287, 1-5. *And now that fifty years have flown*, etc. A reference to the fifty years of Queen Victoria's reign, from 1837 to 1887.

290, 22-23. *Him who took heaven in hand . . . in balance weighed*. An allusion to Newton's enunciation of the law of gravitation.

290, 25. *Hath Darwin's might not made?* Darwin's epoch-making work, *On the Origin of Species*, was published in 1859.

293, 21-23. *Despair may wring men's hearts . . . where patriotic memories rot and rust*. The reference is to the third Gladstone Ministry of 1886 of which the poet disapproved.

294, 1-3. *Not there this year . . . that brand of shame compelling woe*. The Salisbury Unionist Ministry in power in 1887 is lauded by Swinburne. In sending his mother the first printed copy of this ode the poet wrote: "Watts was much taken with the 26th stanza in particular, about the recent triumphs of science: I want you to like the 36th and I doubt not you will approve of the compliments paid to the present Unionist government, and the allusion to its precious predecessor, in the 40th and the five following. But I will say I never wrote anything that I thought better of than I do of the last seven stanzas."

PAN AND THALASSIUS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889)

Though written in a lighter and simpler vein this "lyrical idyl" recalls the theme and imagery of Swinburne's longer autobiographical poem "Thalassius." (See pages 220-224 and Notes on the text of "Thalassius.")

296, 1. *Pan*. The god of the fields and woods. Through the figure of Pan and his attendant Satyrs the poet symbolizes the moods and interests of his youthful verse, more particularly the sensuousness and frank neo-paganism of the first series of *Poems and Ballads*.

296, 2. *O sea-stray, seed of Apollo*. As in "Thalassius" the poet regards himself as the child of the sea and the sun-god Apollo, repre-

senting in this way his inborn love of freedom and the inspiration of his verse. For the use of the title "Thalassius" ("From the Sea") as a pseudonym for Swinburne see Note 220, 25 ff.

296, 14-15. *Not cloven like these*. An allusion to the goat-shaped feet of the Satyrs and Fauns.

297, 9. *Thy heart was estranged from me*. The symbolic reference is to that change of heart which led Swinburne to turn from the glorification of the pleasures of sense in *Poems and Ballads* (1866) to the more ideal themes of *Songs before Sunrise* (1871).

297, 16. *Bade herdsmen quail*. Sudden fright without any visible cause was ascribed to Pan, and called a Panic terror.

297, 27. *The snarl of thy wrath*. Pan is represented as a half animal-like deity.

298, 2. *The sound of thy flute*. The shepherd's pipe of Pan is constantly associated with the god, and gave rise to the familiar stories of his wooing of the nymph Syrinx and his musical contest with Apollo.

298, 20. *The panic that strikes down strangers*. See note on line 46.

299, 23-24. *The one most bright Muse*. Urania, "the heavenly one," the Muse of astronomy. Swinburne, following the example of Milton and Shelley, interprets the old conception in a spiritual rather than in a material way, and makes Urania the goddess who inspires elevated and sublime poetry. As such she is contrasted with Pan, whose woodland pipe and bacchanalian revelry typify the physical and sensuous delights of which the poet sang in youth.

IN TIME OF MOURNING

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed under the tentative title, "May, 1885," in the *Athenæum*, 1887

"In Time of Mourning" and "The Interpreters" were written in memory of Victor Hugo, whose death took place on the 22nd of May, 1885. These tributes to the great French romanticist should be compared with the fine Ode to Hugo cited on pages 96-101 of this book.

THE INTERPRETERS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 1885

See note on the preceding poem.

302, 9-11. *Sappho's self . . . the sea round Lesbos*. The Greek poetess Sappho was a native of Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos.

302, 26. *Man gives them sense and soul by song*. The idea is similar

to that expressed in Shakespeare's well-known lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:—

“And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.”

THE WINDS

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed in *Lesbia Brandon*, 1877

A LYKE-WAKE SONG

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed in *Lesbia Brandon*, 1877

The word *lyke-wake* is derived from *lyke*, a dead body, + *wake*, a watching. The title therefore, means,— A song for a watch over a dead body.

304, 15. *Kells*. Hair-nets.

A JACOBITE'S FAREWELL

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed in *Lesbia Brandon*, 1877

The date of 1716, linked with this poem, marked the termination of the unsuccessful uprising in support of James Stuart, the Chevalier de St. George, otherwise known as the Old Pretender, and the flight of his followers overseas. For references to the Jacobite sympathies of Swinburne and the poet's pride in the sacrifices made by his ancestors for the Stuart cause, see the Introduction to this book. Compare, also, the note on “*Adieux à Marie Stuart*,” 264, 1.

305, 1. *Tyne*. To lose.

THE TYNESIDE WIDOW

From *Poems and Ballads* (1889). Previously printed in *Lesbia Brandon*, 1877

This poem, through its fusion of simplicity with dramatic force and its moving human appeal, is one of the finest of Swinburne's ballads in border dialect.

Tynemouth, Northumberland, where the river Tyne empties into the North Sea, is an important shipping center.

306, 4. *Teen*. Grief.

306, 31. *Mools*. Molds.

307, 71. *Ee-bree*. Eye-brow.

307, 12. *Saut faem*. Salt foam.

A NYMPHOLEPT

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in *Black and White*, 1891

The title means "possessed by a nymph," and refers to a state of rapture or inspiration induced by the powers of nature.

"A Nympholept" must be ranked amongst the great nature poems of the Victorian epoch. Seldom has the interblended splendor and terror of that hour when the forest lies spellbound under "the fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent might" been described with such passion and truth. The pantheistic fervor and thrill of mystic ecstasy that pervade these superb verses are in perfect accord with their recapturing of a primitive and pagan sensibility to an elemental mood of nature. They reflect, to quote the poet's own words:—"the effect of inland or woodland solitude—the splendid oppression of nature at noon which found utterance of old in words of such singular and everlasting significance as panic and nympholepsy."

308, 14. *The one God, Pan*. As the name Pan means *all*, the god came to be regarded as summing up in himself the various attributes of the pagan deities. Hence he was worshipped as a symbol of the universe and a personification of nature.

309, 26-27. *Tongueless as she . . . whose heart now heaves in the nightingale*. I. e., Philomela. For a reference to the classical legend of her transformation into a nightingale, see Note 3, 6.

312, 6. *Typho*. A giant who as a punishment for warring against Zeus was buried alive under Mount Etna.

312, 8. *Men felt and feared thee of old*. Herdsmen, seized by unreasoning terror, ascribed their fright to the influence of Pan, and called it a Panic fear.

314, 1-2. *What light . . . draws near?* Up to this point Swinburne has dwelt mainly on the splendid but fear-inspiring aspects of nature symbolized by the god Pan. He now heralds the approach of a nymph-like spirit—an incarnation of the beauty and loveliness of nature—whose immanent presence fills his sense "with a rapture that casts out fear," banishes the frown of Pan, and turns earth into heaven.

The ecstasy of the "Nympholept" is the theme of the succeeding stanzas.

A SWIMMER'S DREAM

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in *The New Review*, 1890

"A Swimmer's Dream" should be compared with "The Triumph of Time," "Ex-Voto," and the description of Tristram's exultant breasting of the billows in *Tristram of Lyonesse*, as revealing the way in which Swinburne's passion for the sea, while a rapture involving both sense and spirit, has its basis in the tingling joy of actual physical contact with the waves. To the poet the ocean is a native element that "clasps and encompasses body and soul with delight to be living and free."

Somno mollior unda. The Latin motto means, "The wave softer than sleep."

316, 20. *Love's . . . daughter.* Aphrodite, the goddess of love, according to Greek mythology, rose from the sea near Cyprus. Hence the derivation of her name, *foam-born*.

LOCH TORRIDON

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in *The Magazine of Art*, 1890

In the year 1871 Swinburne, in company with Edwin Harrison, to whom this poem is dedicated, started on a Scottish tour, in the course of which they visited Loch Torridon in the Highlands. He wrote of it then as "the divinest combination of lakes, mountains, straits, sea-rocks, bays, gulfs and open sea ever achieved by the forces of Hertha in her most favourable and fiercely maternal mood. I had a divine day there (Sept. 14), and swam right out of one bay round a beautiful headland to the next, and round again back under shelves of rock shining double in the sun above water and below."

In a note on the poem in Swinburne's "Dedicatory Epistle" he speaks of it as an attempt "to render the contrast and the concord of night and day on Loch Torridon."

320, 27. *Maree's dim quivering breast.* A lake near Loch Torridon in the western Highlands of Scotland.

321, 10. *Scaur.* A precipitous part of a mountain-side.

THE PALACE OF PAN

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously published in *The Nineteenth Century*, 1893

326, 26. *Transepts.* The transverse arms of a cruciform church.

327, 27. Chancel. The eastern part of a church, reserved for the clergy and choir.

327, 13. Terrene. Of earth.

327, 19. Where Etna . . . disanointed of might. An allusion to the classical myth that the Titans and Giants who warred against Zeus were buried under Mount Etna.

ETON

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in *The Athenæum*, 1891

These lines were written for the Eton Ninth Jubilee of 1891. Swinburne spent four years and a half at Eton and retained throughout life many affectionate memories of his old school and a reverence for its historical traditions.

328, 1. Four hundred summers and fifty. Eton College was founded by Henry VI, in 1440. *The meadows of Thames.* Eton is situated on the Thames, opposite Windsor, 22 miles west of London.

328, 8. Since fate fell dark on her father. Henry VI was dethroned, imprisoned, and finally put to death by his enemies.

328, 12. Dark was earth at her dawn of birth. Shortly after the founding of Eton, England was plunged into civil strife through the breaking out of the Wars of the Roses.

328, 13. The light first laugh of the sunlight stage. An allusion to the fact that the first English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, was written by Nicholas Udall, a head-master of Eton, and was composed to be played by Eton boys.

329, 3. Lords of state and war. This tribute to the graduates of Eton recalls the Duke of Wellington's famous saying:—"The battle of Waterloo was won on the cricket fields of Eton."

329, 6. Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest singers. In a letter to a friend concerning this poem, Swinburne wrote:—"I am glad you approve of my reference to Shelley, whom I naturally regard—*ut Etoni e loquar*—as in some respects my major; so I determined as soon as I made up my mind to undertake this task, that at all events I would throw his name in the teeth of the orthodox who believe in that one rather small God, Gray.

329, 7. The Promethean word. I. e., the inspiration Shelley received from reading Greek poetry at Eton. The use of the word *Promethean* suggests that Swinburne has in mind, particularly, the influence of Æschylus upon Shelley, subsequently reflected in "Prometheus Unbound."

329, 9-11. *Still the reaches of the river . . . England still.* These lines were inscribed on the wreath of ilex and laurel, sent to Swinburne's burial in 1909, "with grateful homage from Eton."

ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in pamphlet form and in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1890

This is the concluding sonnet of a series of seven on the death of Browning, dated Dec. 13-15, 1889.

330, 2. "*Look forth.*" These lines are a translation of *Prospice*, the title of one of Browning's poems.

THRENODY

From *Astrophel and Other Poems* (1894). Previously printed in *The Nineteenth Century*, 1893

In a letter to his mother, dated Nov. 13th, 1892, Swinburne refers to this poem as follows:—"I have written some verses on Tennyson's beautiful and enviable death in the arms of Shakespeare, as one may say, reading my favourite poem of all just before the end. . . . They are in the same metre as those I wrote last year on his birthday, with which he was (as he wrote) so much pleased—and the two poems are just of the same length."

330, 17. *When night for his eyes grew bright.* Tennyson died on the night of the 6th of October, 1892. *His proud head pillowed on Shakespeare's breast.* A few hours before his death, Tennyson, who retained full control of his intellectual faculties, was engaged in reading Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. He passed away clasping the volume in his hand and a copy of *Cymbeline* was laid in his coffin.

331, 11. *The stars of the morning sang.* Cf. *Job*, XXXVIII, 7.

332, 3. *Imogen.* The daughter of *Cymbeline* and wife of *Posthumus*.

THE LAKE OF GAUBE

From *A Channel Passage and Other Poems* (1904). Previously printed in *The Bookman*, 1889

In the spring of 1862 Swinburne had visited this lake in the heart of the Pyrenees. The romantic surroundings of the spot and the experience of swimming in the chill mountain waters from shore to shore left a vivid impression upon his memory. This is indicated by the fact that many years later he described the scene both in prose and verse. The following passage from *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894)

may be cited as a parallel account of Swinburne's recollections of Lake Gaube on the occasion referred to in this poem:—

"The fiery exuberance of flowers among which the salamanders glide like creeping flames, radiant and vivid, up to the skirt of the tragic little pine-wood at whose heart the fathomless lake lies silent, with a dark dull gleam on it as if of half-tarnished steel; the deliciously keen and exquisite shock of a first plunge under its tempting and threatening surface, more icy cold in spring than the sea in winter; the ineffable and breathless purity of the clasping water in which it seems to savour of intrusive and profane daring that a swimmer should take his pleasure the sport of catching and taming a salamander till it became the pleasantest as well as the quaintest of dumb four-footed friends; the beauty of its purple-black coat of scaled armour inlaid with patches of dead-leaf gold, its shining eyes and its flashing tongue—these things, of which a humbler hand could write at greater length than this, would require such a hand as Hugo's to do them any sort of justice."

332, 1-333, 8. *The sun . . . alive.* These four stanzas of decasyllabic lines constitute the first metrical movement of the poem. They describe the lake and its surroundings.

332, 10. *Living things of light.* Salamanders. Cf. the passage quoted above from *Studies in Prose and Poetry*.

333, 3-4. *That heaven . . . as death.* Swinburne alludes to the local tradition that death lay in wait for anyone who ventured to bathe in Gaube.

333, 9-334, 8. *As the bright salamander . . . lake of Gaube.*

This long stanza in anapestic couplets, descriptive of the dive, forms the second metrical movement of the poem.

334, 9-24. *Whose thought . . . fear.* This terse and short-lined stanza introduces a third metrical movement. It expresses the poet's philosophy of life that courage in the face of the fathomless mysteries of the universe is the secret of well-being.

THE WHITE MAID'S WOOING

From *Posthumous Poems* (1917)

335, 3. *Wastel.* Bread made of the finest flour.

RECOLLECTIONS

From *Posthumous Poems* (1917)

In connection with the editing of the *Posthumous Poems* of Swinburne, Edmund Gosse has made the following note regarding *Recollections*:—

"It is evident that 'Recollections' was addressed to W. B. Scott, and was intended as the Dedication to *Poems and Ballads: Second Series*, 1878, but it was held back when Swinburne recollected his promise to dedicate that volume to Richard Burton. *Poems and Ballads: Third Series*, 1889, was inscribed to Scott in a poem which contains two lines that occur in 'Recollections.' "

336, 3. *Since first your hand as a friend's was mine.* Swinburne's first acquaintance with William Bell Scott was in 1858, when he met this Scottish artist and poet at the home of Sir Walter Trevelyan in Northumberland.

336, 13. *Scaur.* A craggy part of a mountain-side.

Lesser Sapphic strophe.

Prochaire pentameter —
The Sapphic hendecasyllabic

— u / — u / — u u / — u / — u } —————
— u / — u / — u u / — u / — u } —————
— u / — u / — u u / — u / — u } —————
— u u / — u = Adonic line

